

# Patterns - 1976

St. Clair County Community College





# PATTERNS 76

A Publication of  
St. Clair County Community College  
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## Preface

It is obvious that the patterns of human expression are infinitely various. In spite of the rules in textbooks and the pressures of fashion, the selections in this eighteenth annual collection illustrate the freshness and individuality of our students' visions. If we open the eyes of our hearts, these verbal and graphic statements can show us life from new perspectives.

The Committee gives thanks to everyone who competed this year and wishes that not one ever loses the desire to express special insights.

### COMMITTEE

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Architectural Rendering

Kathy Gramer



## Dedication



Whenever someone considers the experiences of students in this college, sooner or later the influence of Chester J. Aubuchon appears. Directly and indirectly, Mr. Aubuchon has contributed to the successes of a great many students. As Dean of Men and Athletic Director beginning in 1954, and as Dean of Student Affairs recently, Mr. Aubuchon has exercised his desire and the responsibility of his office to create policies and an atmosphere that would induce both personal growth and learning.

During a 1964 program in his honor, a Michigan State University citation included this statement: **"Chet Aubuchon exemplifies to the highest degree the results which can be achieved through the maximum application of effort, courage, loyalty and integrity. His continued desire to encourage and promote these admirable traits among the young people with whom he is in constant contact has earned him his present high regard in our Michigan educational and athletic environment."**

In the twelve years since that citation, Mr. Aubuchon has persisted in his efforts to foster his ideals, including support of this magazine. It is appropriate that the results of the efforts of the students whose works are published in **Patterns** should be presented in support of this dedication of this issue in his honor.

Incidentally, in January 1964, the Governor of Kentucky named Chester J. Aubuchon as an honorary Colonel of Kentucky.

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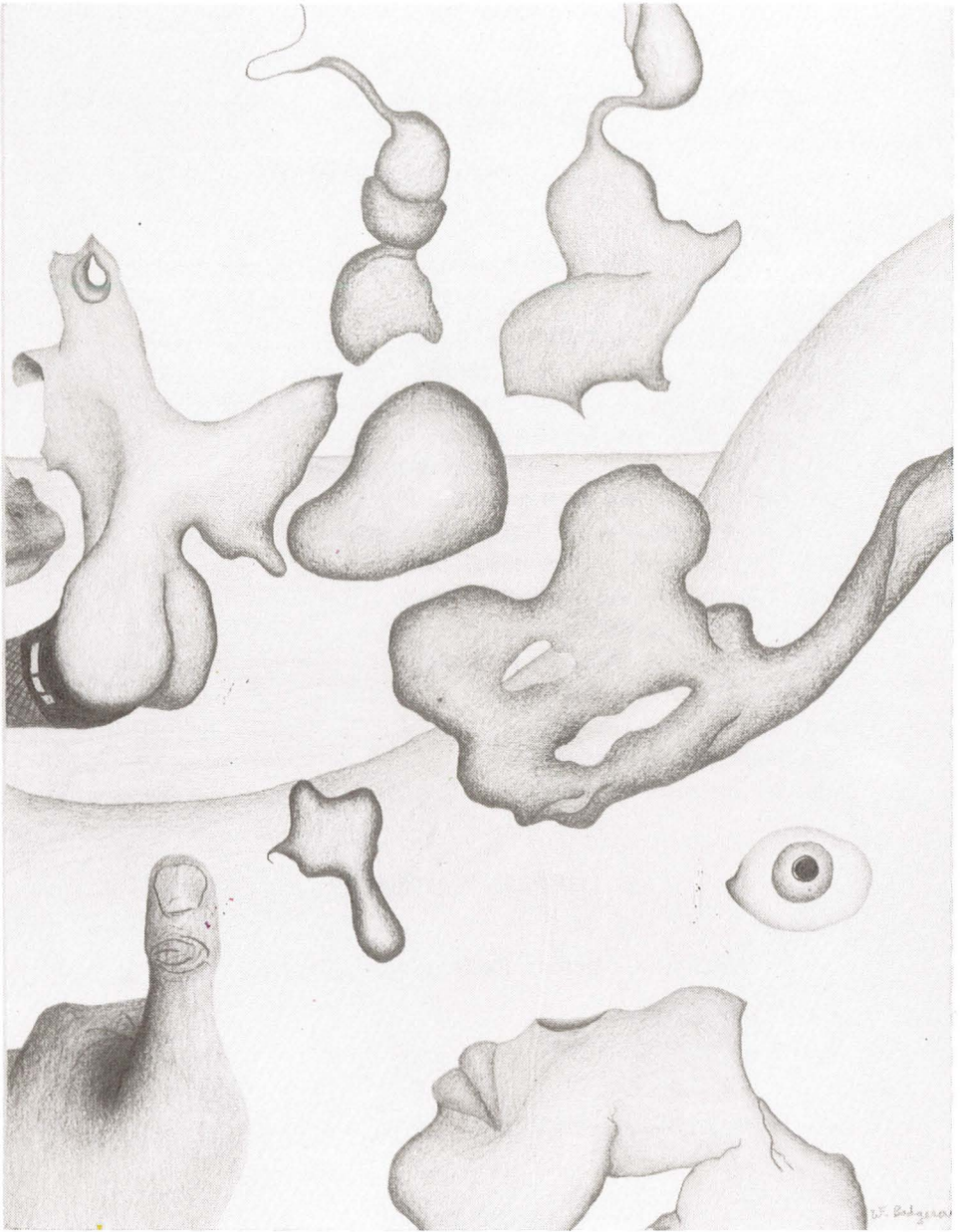
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Matter

Walter Badgerow



# Christmas and Joy

by

Robert G. Greer

The cross was too heavy  
to bear, save for one.

A pampered darling, she was, glazed with irresistible sweetness. Lying on the floor with cupped hands under her chin, while watching television, as six-year olds do, "Brother Keith," she called, flinging her words over one shoulder, and added, "Do you know why they put 'The N' when a cartoon is over?"

A whisper of curiosity prompted my reply, "No, Joy," confessing my ignorance, "Tell me why."

"So little kids won't sit there all day and expect to see more," she quirked back with adult seriousness.

I laughed heartily; that made my day, and conscious thought made me realize that I was unable to recall my last good laugh, since there had been so few of late. I pulled Joy over to me and said: "I love you."

She responded just as simply, "I love you, too."

"Let's go for a walk, Joy."

"Okay, Keith," she said excitedly and added: "But can we build a Frosty?"

"What's a Frosty, Joy?"

"A snowman, a Frosty the snowman, silly," she said in a cute manner, but with an air to convey understanding, rather than ridicule.

Hand in hand, we walked to the clothes closet to get our gear, and with a disapproving glance at the other little people to let them know that I was no "Pied Piper of Hamelin" our privacy was insured. Joy allowed her impatience to go unchecked, as she put on her gear, and got her coat zipper stuck, but that was quickly repaired.

Outside, we found that the sky was painted with a hue of very special light, and while Boreas vented his fury, a dense flurry of snow hurriedly covered the few remaining patches of brown and green, in hibernation. Inside it had been cozy. Indeed it was, cozy and warm — a special and unique kind of togetherness, at long last. A splendid hemlock, cut out of the back forty, adorned the family room, where flames erratically danced from the fireplace. And the pine-scented aroma filled the room, enhancing awareness of the yuletide season and contributing to the warmth.

We hurried out into the snow; we rushed to play. Our efforts to walk between the falling snowflakes met with little success, but the fun was in the trying. With eyes closed and faces paralleling the heavens, we caught many white crystals of frozen water in our mouths, and were refreshed by the flakes that missed the mark, and melted on our faces. The making of a Frosty the snowman was put off for another day; the snow was not the packing kind. We were happy just the same, being ourselves and being together.

Suddenly, a rustle in the barn caught our attention, and we could see Danny's dog, Max; a fine sporting critter was he, a Golden Retriever. He was strong of muscle with a heavy coat of fur, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and universal respect. Hunting with Danny, plunging into nearby lakes and streams in pursuit of the chase, were mutual delights. They were kindred spirits; a unique closeness existed between them, and no one else was privy. Now, Max appeared as a morose old fellow, and longed for his friend and master; he showed plainly that he wanted to be left alone by ignoring us, and Joy and I decided to respect his wishes.

We enjoyed this sharing experience; I was her "real live Soldier Hero," who had recently returned from (Viet) Nam, and she was my little sister. Without telegraphing the blow, she numbed me.

"This is Danny's kind of day," and added: "He used to love to hunt in the snow with Max, didn't he, Keith?"

I swallowed back the hurt, damned the tide of tears, and softly rejoined, while placing her mittened hand in mine, "Yes, Joy, this is Danny's kind of day."

The chilling wind suggested that our sharing the marvels of winter-tide should not be over-extended, and as we approached the front porch, Gene, Danny's twin brother, drove up. Joy ran to meet him, and proudly announced: "Gene is home! Gene is home!" and then addressing him, she said: "Merry Christmas, Gene. Your presents are in the house."

"Merry Christmas, Joy," he muttered.

Approaching his car, I was perplexed at the caricature of that young man, who was my younger brother. In his early years, I thought to myself, Gene had exhibited such outstanding potential, and my steps to him failed to outpace my terror. He looked like a bum. No! A zombie. No! A bushy-hair militant. No! Oh! I know not what. He was spent — mind, soul, and body. I painfully probed him with my eyes for answers to no avail. Finally, unable to stand the silence any longer, before he had a chance to open his car door, I hissed through my teeth, "Why?"

His eyes met mine, and he intently murmured, "I have not been able to get my head straight, since . . .," his words trailing off into nothingness, and then became audible again, "What do you know? You were in the Nam. He died in my arms, not yours. He took part of me with him." Again, he became inaudible, and that was all right.

"Gene," I said: "I can understand that, cool it, stand tall." I stuck my head and shoulders through the window, and hugged him, and he cried.

Joy was puzzled by the commotion, and again her innocence betrayed her, "He'll be all right now," and we both knew that she was right.

Gene went home without going inside, so that he might return, fit and proper. I ushered Joy to the door, and on the porch I won her silence — not to tell anyone that Gene had come home. And she kept our secret, as she had done so often with Danny, during those precious few remaining days with him. He had prepared her well; God bless'im. We entered the house. With deliberation, after closing the door behind us, I momentarily paused to put a rein on my emotions, while Mom removed Joy's gear. As Joy brushed past me, she winked with both eyes, rather than one, and went to join the other little people watching a Christmas television special "Baby Jesus Still Lives"; and I looked through the window, and saw nothing.



Our family had a particular fondness for Christmas, as season for worship, merriment and song, until Grandma died in November, nineteen seventy. Then, in mid-December, nineteen seventy-two, the web of the spider was in the process of being spun in the deep shadows of his youthful body. Unable to turn it around, unable to change it; we coped with it and lived with it — taking one day at a time. My God! My God! Danny was so sick, and no one knew, except for Mom. His shortness of breath, absence of appetite, and increasing need of more sleep made Mom suspect. But the real clue that put her in a state of catatonic shock was two deep-purplish scratches on his face, which had occurred during one of his hunting jaunts. Minor scratches, such as those, should have healed in a matter of a couple days, but his scratches failed to respond to the body's innate healing processes. Call Mom's insight maternal intuition, if you will; but she knew. His separation from life occurred with equal certainty, this time, known only to the Heavenly Father. Future Christmases seemed doomed to reverent silence. However, we were resolved that this momentous occasion would be different, and it was.

Dad was bent on making this day, Christmas Day, the best day of all possible days; and now, the day was coming to a close. Most friends and relatives had observed the open-house invitation by coming, exchanging gifts, and departing early. But naturally, some remained.

Polite-talk stirred me back to focus on the real, and after storing my gear next to the heater to dry, I walked into the family room and sat down in my favorite arm chair to absorb the coziness and warmth. Light and warm conversation flourished between the remaining few visitors, because no one dared mar the occasion. This was the first gathering of the clan since March, March 31st, the day after Easter. Yet, the specter of that occasion hung heavily over the adults. As for the kids, children will be children; God bless 'em. They uninhibitedly and tirelessly flaunted their pleasures, despite numerous intimidating glances from fathers and mothers, alike. The children had little to fear; Grandpa was in their midst, worse than the lot, and served as their captain by denouncing parental grimaces and encouraging the children to enjoy their fancy.

My dad, their Grandpa, was a prince, and he needed involvement with the children. Throughout Danny's illness, he faithfully manifested his love toward Danny, while at the same time responding with purpose to satisfy his occupational role. Between Danny and his job, there was little spare time remaining for the rest of the family. He was particularly proud that Danny had received an appointment to the military academy, but that was history, now. Dad and Danny had never taken time before to put their feelings into words. But during his illness, they talked endlessly — about themselves, about things that had happened, about things they did together long ago, as if they had only recently met. Those moments of sharing were supremely blissful, and Dad eventually accepted Danny's fate, in the presence of God, without understanding. Soon after Danny's demise, he left his prestigious position of employment; maybe, he felt cheated for not having devoted more time to his family during those yesteryears, or perhaps he realized that his family needed him more now, on a one-to-one basis and on call, as never before. Also, he feared other losses, after having learned an invaluable lesson: One does not measure life by its length, but only by the fullness of its love.

Thoroughly comfortable now in my chair, my thoughts ebbed back to Gene. Seasoned veterans were not supposed to lose their cool under fire, at least that is what our Drill Instructor led us to believe, and he was right. The army was rough, and Nam was brutal. And the often-quoted dogma "Survival of the Fittest," had merit too. My exposure to military life was not altogether bad; I had little time to think about home, or about Danny's pain and suffering, and for that I was grateful. Death, misery, and pain were no strangers to me; I had seen it all, friend and foe, alike, but still . . . Stop tormenting yourself, I thought, as the telephone started to ring; relieved, I thanked God for little favors and smiled humbly.

Joy was outraced to the phone by her brother, Brian, who was seven years her senior. With a winner's grin on his face, he picked up the receiver, and said: "Hello! . . . Who's calling?" . . . then gleefully exclaimed, "Merry Christmas, Helena! When are you coming home?" . . . "Keith, Keith," he shouted, "Helena is on the phone."

My serenity left me, as I walked over to Brian, and he begrudgingly handed me the receiver. "Hi there, Sis," I said crisply to our oldest sister, who had been expected to arrive from the East Coast on Christmas eve; but again, no one mentioned her absence for fear of marring this occasion. I hastened to add, "We miss you; thought you would be here by now." . . . My ears were deceiving me; I tightened my grip around the receiver, and listened more intently.

"Keith, I am not coming home just now, I just can't deal with it."

"Hey Sis," I said: "I buy what you're saying, but let me lay this on you; we are all emotionally bankrupted; come home, Helena." During Danny's illness, she was a portrait of strength, a kind of "Keeper of the Keys," attending to the family needs, while Mom and Dad cared for Danny's every need, as best they could.

"Keith, I feared his death, more than anyone would care to guess," and without waiting for a response, she rattled on, "There are so many more in this world, more eligible than he. You know, as silly as it may sound, I tried to bargain with HIM." Her voice was quivering, and she went on, "God endowed him with the finest of personal, intellectual and spiritual goodness; just everything, and he had his whole life to live." Her emotions bested her.

"Helena, don't hold back, we're never too old to cry," and she did. Pensively, I continued, "Be kind to us, as well as yourself, and catch that aluminum bird. Come home, Helena. Share your hurt with us." I paused until her sobbing subsided, and then continued, "Your hurt is ours. Come home, at least think about it, okay? And I'll tell everyone that your departure was delayed by the storm." I was not sure that she heard me, despite her acknowledgement, and then there was a click. It seemed so loud, so final, and the thought of reciprocating in kind, by hanging up that receiver, was scary. My courage was ebbing; my eyes were dimmed by tears, as I walked wearily back to my chair, putting one foot before the other, my descent into it was as heavy as the weight of judgment. I closed my eyes to void them of water.

Brian joined me. "Keith, is Helena coming home?"

"Hope so, but that storm on the East Coast has everything tied up," I replied wishfully with little confidence, and added: "We'll see."

Slowly, he turned away, and I knew my answer did nothing for him, also I suspected that he might have overheard some of what I had said



to Helena. Brian was a child extraordinaire; he excelled in everything that he put his mind and energies to do. And Danny had made Brian a competitor, when Danny realized that many of his goals, which were once within reach, were outdistancing his capacities. Brian's reputation of excellence won him praise and attention, to him synonymous with love. Yet, his spotlight was shared by the love and attention given to Danny, to whom he always deferred. Danny loved Brian, Brian loved Danny, and Brian loved to be loved. I instinctively reached out and grabbed Brian's arm, as he was turning away from me, and he glanced back at me.

"Brian," I said, "Of course Helena is coming home; you must keep the faith."

"Okay," he said with little consolation, and I gave him a loving swat on his buttocks; and as he left me in silence, he was smiling.

Suddenly, I was aroused by a strange vibration. Looking up, I saw Mom, "Poor Mom," I mused. She had entered the room, and was coming toward me with a cognac in hand.

After so much fanfare, it was apparent that she was exhausted, but she was adept at disguise. She was one of the beautiful people; everyone at Children's Hospital, who met her, said so, and no one had to convince me. His death treated her cruelly. She had harbored infinite faith, a miracle perhaps, that he would be saved; her "waiting on the mercy of God," which she said repeatedly, placed her own health in jeopardy more than once. She would say frequently: "I will always give my roses on earth, and have no regrets when death comes." Yet, she lived in constant fear of losing Danny, losing him forever. Her moral courage was magnified tenfold for attending to his unobvious needs; her infinite care and devotion were unselfishly dispensed to his dying day; and her recognition of time, between them, was a matter of the highest priority. She faced that moment, neither frightened nor with visible pain, for she knew that the love and the time they had shared was sufficient-eternal. But she continued to grieve.

With outstretched hands, I beckoned her to sit on the arm of my chair, and said; "Mom, it is great to be home." I put my lips to her cheek, and they communicated a soft, intimate kiss, an understanding kiss that only a mother and son can share.

She took my hand in hers and squeezed it with a special kind of tenderness, and rejoined: "It is great for all my 'Boukies' to be home again." I stroked her hand gently, and we both knew that all was well, since 'Boukie' was an expression of endearment between them, Mom and Danny, and now that endearment would be shared.

I removed the brandy snifter from her hand, and slowly lifting it just beneath my nostrils with both hands, I slowly inhaled the stimulating fragrance, as a connoisseur would do. Then I sipped from the stemmed goblet. My eyes were riveted to hers, "Mom," I said, "Merry Christmas." While we continued to enjoy each other's company, my thoughts flashed back to both Helena and Gene. Briefly, I detailed my conversations with them to Mom. We agreed that Gene should call Helena, and if she decided to come home, he should meet her at the airport. Mom placed her hands around mine, which were still cupping the snifter, and without speaking, she sipped a gout of Cognac, and left to call Gene.



I was alone again. Bottoms-up, I was thinking, as I finished the contents in the sparkling crystal. The hot, burning, stinging sensation of the cognac relieved my tension, and an occasional stroke to my belly reinforced my aid and comfort from torment of gluttony. I placed the crystal down on the floor beside the leg of my chair, rested my head on the back of it, and closed my eyes.

The lack of household noises broke my rest. I swung my head around in amazement to find that all the guests had taken leave. It was late, a few minutes after midnight. It was no longer Christmas, I thought sadly. Family members had gathered around the dining room table, consuming snacks, while waiting the arrival of Gene and Helena, who had called earlier from the airport. Even Joy and Brian were up, way past their bedtime, to share their Christmas experiences with them. I left my chair, and followed the noise. A few minutes afterwards, shrieking cries of welcome from both Joy and Brian and woolf woolf-like barks from Max were prompted by car lights entering the driveway, and there was no doubt that Helena and Gene had arrived, despite heavy snow and travelers' warning, which caused their delay. They were greeted warmly. Our togetherness was a reality, at long last, but our being together seemed to place us under duress, save for Joy, who was ever so helpful by assisting Helena and Gene to remove bows, ribbons and wrapping papers from their gifts, many times before they could assist her.

Without forethought, I said: "We had a real nice Christmas, Helena." At that very moment, I wished that my tongue had been cut out of my mouth. My eyes quickly audited the faces of my loved ones to see if I had emotionally bruised them. I had erred seriously; the significance of my remarks provoked thoughts of Danny's absence. Sobbing was restrained; movement was reduced to paralysis; and accelerated rates of loud breathing were depressed. Fortunately, these undercurrents of adult emotions failed to touch Joy, who, in the meantime, had returned to play with her gifts that she had ordered directly from Santa — an electric train, a watch, and a doll.

Joy said with unpretentious candor, as if I had spoken to her earlier, rather than to Helena, "Yes! Keith, this was a very nice Christmas day," and then went on to add, apparently to reinforce her own faith, "Danny must have been happy to be with us today."

Hesitantly, I measured each word, and said: "Yes, Joy, Danny is happy about today, he was happy yesterday, and he will be happy always, because within each of us, he lives."

Joy looked at me quizzically, and said: "Just like baby Jesus, heh! Keith," and continued: "Danny will always be with us."

"Right, Joy, both baby Jesus and Danny will be with us always."

The changed atmosphere became warm, one of reverence. The pain had not mysteriously disappeared, but had temporarily subsided. The time for words had passed, and there was no need to elaborate that "Danny died peacefully the day after Easter, at peace with his loved ones, his many friends, with Almighty God, and with self." When one runs the risk of giving, one gets a lot back in return. We would always love Danny, each in our own way. But, we also realized that the time had come to let him go, and did, save for one.



Flowing Motion

# Bruises

by

janna leigh heltman

i sketch my men  
in blacks  
and blues;  
make a stranger  
of myself  
by loving them.  
merging  
with the bronze  
and ivory;  
i am unfamiliar  
with the goals  
and justifications,  
but materials  
and methods  
are the palm  
of my hand,  
the gist  
of my ethics.  
(i know murder,  
    large and limbless.  
    i know pain,  
    grueling and gutted.)  
i sketch my men  
in black  
and blue conformity.  
confront them  
with their conquest,  
watch their moves:  
meticulous.  
lavish.  
insincere.  
then flush  
their contamination  
from my otherwise  
stable mind,  
by filing them  
with my portfolio  
in sketches  
of black  
and blue.



# The Voice of Loneliness

by

Steve Young

Every individual, at least once in his lifespan, has felt loneliness. Loneliness is a state of mind that some wish for and others fear. The fear of being alone distorts personalities and cripples minds. A man can be driven to commit suicide or a child to tears for want of human companionship. It is a universal affliction that is portrayed frequently in man's literature, music, and lifestyle.

But there are various degrees and many kinds of loneliness. Some individuals find themselves driven to alcohol or drugs for fear of being lonely. James Baldwin, in his short story, "Sonny's Blues", has portrayed Sonny as a lonely black man, who is unable to communicate his thoughts or feelings to other people. Sonny turns to drugs to deaden his senses to a level by which he escapes a sense of loneliness. In a conversation with his brother, Sonny finally describes his feelings:

... it's terrible sometimes, inside . . . that's what's the trouble. You walk these streets, black and funky and cold, and there's not really a living ass to talk to and there's nothing shaking, and there's no way of getting it out — that storm inside.<sup>1</sup>

Sonny tries to live with his loneliness but fails, until the end of the story when he discovers that he can express his feelings to others through music.

Another author, James Joyce, presents a man, Little Chandler, who is affected by a blanket of aloneness. Here is a man who longs for the people and the accompanying activities of London and Paris. In reality, Little Chandler passes through life in cold, lonely Dublin tied to a boring job. Chandler wants support and affection from his wife, but in truth she is a cold, sharp-tongued shrew. Joyce's character realizes he is imprisoned for life in an environment of loneliness that he will never learn to accept but because he is weak will never escape. Little Chandler is doomed to a life of loneliness and failure.

Elderly people frequently find themselves trapped in a lonely existence. To balance this lack of family or friends the old assume often the position of a "watcher". They attend public functions to feel that they are a vibrant part of life. The short story, "Miss Brill", by Katherine Mansfield gives the reader an image similar to this. The character of Miss Brill feels she can escape her lonely, singular existence by attending Sunday band concerts. Miss Brill momentarily becomes part of the virile mainstream of life that she longs for. But a young couple shatter the illusion in their rude conversation:

... because (of) that stupid old thing at the end there? . . . Why does she come at all? — Who wants her? Why doesn't she keep her silly old mug at home?<sup>2</sup>

Miss Brill's day is ruined and she returns home lonely and dissatisfied. But it is only temporary for she will renew her illusion the following Sunday. Miss Brill has learned to live with loneliness.

Many individuals deceive themselves throughout life into believing that they have the desired companionship. Tolstoy, in "The Death of Ivan Ilych", has painted a picture of just such a man. Ivan Ilych fills his life with everything that would make him the epitome of a satisfied man. But Ilych does not learn until just before he dies that his life is an illusion. His family

and friends care little for him and he is alone on his deathbed. Ilych had disguised his loneliness so well, that it took the cold finality of death to show the truth.

Many people cannot face the spectre of loneliness and seek means of escape such as suicide. Arthur Miller has given us a poignant picture in his play, **All My Sons**. Joe Keller cannot face the realization that his family has lost confidence in him. He foresees that a life away from his family would be unbearably lonely. To escape, Keller commits suicide.

Occasionally men find a cure for loneliness only to lose it again. For example, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark", the major character, Aylmer, seeks the companionship of a woman. But Aylmer's satisfaction turns to displeasure because of a slight imperfection in his wife, a facial birthmark. Aylmer spends much of his time and knowledge trying to eradicate this defect. As he finally grasps the prize he seeks, Aylmer takes the life from his wife. Aylmer, once again, is a lonely man. He will bury himself in work and the desire for knowledge to escape his loneliness.

Each man in his pursuit of happiness fights a battle with loneliness. Some are victorious and banish solitude. Others are not so fortunate because of some tragic flaw, and doom themselves to perpetual loneliness. This is the way of man from the dawn of creation to the end of life. Authors will continue to remark on this condition. Music will continue to portray man alone with himself. But in the final analysis, each individual must plot his own course through that vast stretch of ocean called loneliness. Each man must learn to live with being alone, or he fails at life.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues", **Trio** (Harper and Row, 1975), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup>Katherine Mansfield, "Miss Brill", **Trio** (Harper and Row, 1975), p. 214.

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Eric

Karen Meyer



# Dinner Party

by

Colleen Mackey

"Like a Bad Dream" is a most appropriate title for this serious story by Heinrich Boll. The narrator finds himself caught in a situation which he says "is beyond understanding." (p.449) As is common in many societies, he discovers that knowing the right people is the key to success and he abandons his morals for material goods.

The story begins with an anxious couple awaiting the arrival of the Zumpens, who were to be dinner guests. The dinner is a business arrangement, for the narrator is hoping to get a contract through Zumpen for his excavating business. All goes well but the husband fails to mention the contract. Since this was the purpose of the dinner, his wife insists they see the Zumpens the same evening. The narrator is pleased to discover he has been awarded the contract but he is as shocked as the reader when he realized he has paid a bribe.

There are many indications throughout the story that a bribe may occur, for money is a very important factor in the narrator's life. He is thinking about the 20,000 marks that contract will bring and thinks "... I wanted the money." (p. 495). While speaking to his wife before the Zumpens arrive, he states outright "... you know how we need the money" (p. 495). There are also more subtle references to money. During the evening the narrator thinks, "I could deduct the bottle of cognac from my income tax" (p. 495) and later he counts how many cigars Zumpen has smoked.

His wife, Bertha, is also very conscious of money although this is not as apparent at first. She very quietly impresses upon her husband the importance of speaking to Zumpen about the contract because after all, "Zumpen can be useful" (p. 495). When her husband doesn't mention the contract she appears to chide him gently. "Why didn't you mention the contract to him?" (p. 496), but drives home the point with, "Now look you could have used any excuse to ask him into your study." (p. 496).

On the surface, Bertha seems to be a very pleasant, calm, capable person. She rebukes her husband, "One should never mention Christ's name in connection with money!" (p. 495). She reassures him when he is nervous before the Zumpens arrive. She knows all the proper formalities: what to wear, what to serve, what to talk about. But underneath there is a hard, steely quality about her. Although she speaks quietly and gently, there is a sense of urgency and drive. She knows what she wants and she'll do anything to get it. When the Zumpens leave and her husband still hasn't mentioned the contract, she tells him "we have to go over there, of course" (p. 497) adding "... all I know is, there's 20,000 marks involved." (p. 497).

Bertha's actions belie her words. She tells her husband, "I am trying to help you, I want you to find out for yourself how to deal with such things. All we had to do was call up Father and he would have settled the whole thing for you with one phone call, but I want you to get the contract on your own" (p. 498-498). While her husband is supposedly learning the business by himself, it is she who manages the whole affair. She arranges the dinner, she decides they must see the Zumpens, she alters the bid raising it just enough to keep it the lowest one, she signs the check allowing them to alter the bid, she even decides what her husband is to wear.

Bertha seems to be guiding her husband throughout the evening. She goes with him to the Zumpens but makes him go up alone. Mr. Zumpen is not there and when her husband returns, Bertha says, "I think you could have talked about it to her too" (p. 497). She knows "he is at the Gaffel Club playing chess as he does every Wednesday evening." (p.497). This along with the fact that she just smiles when her husband finds the contract is his, makes one wonder whether the whole thing has been planned; Bertha knew exactly what she was doing when she altered the bid price and wrote the check.

Bertha has been raised in a business family and is well acquainted with the ways of the business world. Her father is an influential man who has been in business for years. At home and at boarding school Bertha learned the proper things needed for her role of a businessman's wife.

Although she is aware of the operations of the business world, her husband is not. He is embarrassed about the dinner because of the contract. He is reluctant to bring up the subject and never does. He doesn't want to go over to the Zumpens and when the check is written he is confused saying, "Perhaps I failed to grasp what was happening at the time" (p. 498). But as the evening progresses he changes. They return home by a different route and when Zumpen calls later, he is not surprised. It is almost as if he were expecting it. Bertha has raised the bid 25 pfennigs instead of 15 and Zumpen wants compensation for it. The narrator is not aware of this but says, "That wasn't a mistake, she did it with my consent." (p. 499). As he bargains with Zumpen trying to lower the price of the bribe he laughs but thinks "it's like a bad dream" (p.499). Still he does nothing to reverse the fact.

As Bertha chose a different way home, so has the narrator chosen a different route through life. He is now officially initiated into the business world. He may not understand what has happened but he accepts it. He has achieved success for a price — his morals have been relinquished for money.

#### FOOTNOTES

All quotes are from "Like a Bad Dream" by Heinrich Boll reproduced in **Literature: Structure, Sound, And Sense** by Laurence Perrine.



Cedar Waxwings

Connie Robinson



# The Strangler

by  
James R. Rush

Henry Haller did not want to put the newspaper down. He knew that the minute he did so, Marge would start. Her constant bickering and nagging episodes, now daily, were driving him to seek refuge behind his newspaper. To prevent her tirade, Henry purposely re-read an article for the third time.

The news story concerned a mad strangler who held the city's women in a state of suspense and terror. Police had discovered the horribly beaten and sexually abused body of the strangler's sixth victim the previous night and they seemed powerless to stop him. Traps had failed; the strangler simply ignored them. Adding insult to injury, he had called the Police Chief at three in the morning to laugh hysterically as he berated the efforts of the police who had no clues as to his identity.

"Henry, aren't you finished with the paper yet? You've been hiding behind it since dinner," Marge whined.

Henry did not answer. He ground his teeth and began to read the article again.

"Henry, did you hear me? I'm talking to you!"

Henry gripped the paper so hard his knuckles became white with the strain. Too bad, he thought, that the strangler hadn't picked Marge as a victim.

"Yes, Marge. I hear you," he answered tiredly.

"Well?"

"Well what!" Henry exclaimed, balling the paper into a shapeless hunk. "What is it?"

"It's the neighbor children, Henry. They make horrible noises all day. I can't sleep. They trample the flower beds," she wheedled, her voice taking on that sing-song quality that set Henry's teeth on edge. "And," she went on, "just this afternoon, one of them rode his bicycle into me when I was coming from the market. The little heathen knocked me down on the sidewalk. I've never been so embarrassed in my life, sitting there with groceries spilled all around."

Henry suppressed a smile that threatened to blossom into a belly laugh and said, "Well Marge, what do you want me to do? Have them arrested, thrown into jail, or if you prefer I'll get my hunting rifle and ambush them at the candy store."

"You try so hard to be funny, don't you Henry?" Marge snapped, her porcine eyes blazing with fury.

"I'm, I, ah don't feel too well, Marge, I've had a very hard day, now, I sincerely wish you would let me relax a little."

"Relax!" Marge almost screamed, breaking away from, and then returning to her sing-song sarcasm. "You've been relaxing for thirteen years now. Why don't you do something, Henry?"

Henry stood in front of Marge, who lay draped over her over-stuffed chair. He was trembling inside with fury. His voice became tighter and more strained as he spoke through clenched teeth, "I am going to do something Marge, I am going to read the paper! Then I will talk to the children."

"Talk, talk, to the children!"

"Yes, talk."

"Ha!" Marge sarcasmed as she floundered and heaved her bulk from the chair and flounced from the room. Looking like nothing so much as a disturbed and displaced water buffalo, Henry gleefully conceded.

With Marge's exit from the room, Henry sank back into his chair, the fury draining slowly from his mind and body. How, Henry wondered, had Marge changed so much since their marriage. Once she had been beautiful, soft voiced and pleasant to be with. She had been sexually alive and vibrant, but now the newlywed bliss and bedroom gymnastics had turned into a simple matter of bread and butter as far as he was concerned. Marge had become fat. Henry thought of her as that big blob of bitch, a misarranged glob of calories and carbohydrates with a voice slipping into either a whine or a biting sarcastic shrill. She complained incessantly and berated him for the slightest mistake, real or imagined.

Henry had considered divorcing her, but dismissed that thought at once. Marge, through an inheritance, owned the insurance company that had hired and continued to employ Henry although he was a standing joke in the claims department. No, divorce would create more problems than it would solve.

If she would only die, Henry thought, but he knew that she wouldn't; Marge was as healthy as the proverbial horse that she had come to resemble and would probably outlive him.

Henry straightened the rumpled paper against his knees and his eyes fell again on the news article about the strangler. Henry read it once more, paying closer attention to the details.

The strangler's victims were always women of middle age, most of whom lived alone. The strangler had an uncanny knack of gaining his victim's confidence, the police theorized, since there were never signs of forced entry. The condition of the victim's bodies created a mild sensation with local psychologists and psychiatrists. Through investigation and the coroner's report, it was determined that the strangler was not only a murderer and rapist, but practiced necrophilia as well.

The instrument of death was a thin nylon cord, left coiled around the throats of his victims, presumably as a calling card for the police. Once again Henry wondered why the strangler had not picked Marge. It was at this split instant in time that the idea of murdering Marge bloomed inside Henry's head.

Perhaps the seed of destruction had lain dormant inside his mind all along, awaiting only the right stimulus to make it grow and flower. Henry caught his breath as the full impact of the idea hit him. Marge would be a perfect victim for the strangler. She was alone all day, she was middle age, and Henry thought, she was in the way.

A smile of pure contentment crossed Henry's face with the realization that his yearly fishing trip was due the following week. Marge wouldn't go. She never went after the first time. She complained of the wet weather around the lake, the sand that got into her shoes, the cabin's facilities, limited as they were, were unthinkable to Marge. The very things that Henry enjoyed, gave birth to Marge's bitchiness and substance to her planned demise. Well, Henry thought, fine. Just fine, while I'm fishing at the lake next week, miles from home, the strangler will claim his seventh victim. Marge!

Henry continued to iron out the details for the next week; he secured a thin nylon rope from a box of odds and ends. He told Marge of his plans to leave for the lake on the following Friday. As usual, she became sullen and angry, hardly speaking to Henry for the rest of the week, for which he was grateful.

He notified his office that he would be gone from Friday until the following Wednesday.

At first Henry had his doubts about his ability to commit the crime, but not for long. Marge's dark mood over his trip to the cabin had increased her vile remarks and finally on Friday she refused to prepare dinner.

"You can fry some of the fish you catch," she said with a snarl, when Henry inquired about dinner. She lay on the couch staring moronically at the television, stuffing chocolates into her mouth.

"Very well," Henry replied, "I'll be back on Tuesday night . . ."

"I could not care less," Marge replied bitterly.

Henry turned on his heel and left the room to gather his rods and tackle box. Half an hour later he left the house and drove the entire distance to his cabin; his determination became stronger with each mile.

The cabin was located on the south side of a lake in a wooded area. It was completely isolated from cabins on the other side by the thick trees and heavy foliage.

Stopping first on the north side of the lake where a small general store was located. Henry entered the store and paused at the counter. The proprietor was busy with another customer so Henry inspected various lures and baits as he waited. At last the old man shuffled over to Henry.

"Ah, Mr. Haller, back fer yer try at the bass again?"

"Sure am, Mr. Dade, have you got any effective lures this time. The ones you sold me last time wasn't just exactly what I needed. Sometimes I think you are on the fish's side."

"Well, yer got to give 'em a fair chance, ain't that right?"

"I suppose so," Henry replied, choosing a lure from the counter. "I'm going to be here until Tuesday afternoon, Mr. Dade, so I suppose I had best get groceries. Do you still stock the smoked ham?"

"Sure thing."

"Good, give me a couple pounds of that, and enough canned goods to last 'til Tuesday."

Henry and Mr. Dade chatted casually as the old man put the groceries in a box for Henry. At last he was ready to go and the old man waved from the porch as Henry drove away.

He carefully guided the station wagon over the rutted road to his own cabin. There he parked the wagon headed towards the highway. He did not want to have to use the headlights later on when it was dark. Entering the cabin, he had to evict a family of skunks. After this was diplomatically done he made the cabin livable as best he could. He cooked and devoured some of the smoked ham hungrily; all the time silently damning Marge for refusing to cook dinner.

Deciding to get some fishing in on this trip, he walked to the lake's edge with his favorite flyrod. He fished for an hour, enjoying the quiet solitude of the lake. He caught two bass that were large enough to keep for the frying pan, and threw back several that were borderline cases of the size limit.



With darkness approaching, the mosquitoes began to bite in earnest, and Henry decided to call it a night and get down to the business at hand.

His plan called for returning to the city, arriving after midnight. He would park his station wagon several blocks from his home. Then, under cover of darkness, he would enter the back door and strangle Marge as she slept. He was confident that he could strangle Marge with the nylon cord. The only thing that really bothered Henry was the sexual abuse he would have to subject Marge to. The pig was bad enough alive, but dead! Henry shuddered when he remembered looking up the word from the news article. He momentarily toyed with the idea of putting it off until the next night, but knew that by doing so he might lose his courage.

He was sure that he could play the part of the bereaved husband for the benefit of the police. Old man Dade would swear that Henry was at the lake at the time of Marge's murder if the question ever came up. To be extra certain, Henry scattered various things about the cabin to give it a recently lived-in look. Several cigarettes from the car ashtray made an extra touch, Henry thought. Leaving the pan on the stove and the lights on in the cabin, Henry took leave of the cabin and walked quietly and determinedly toward the station wagon.

Driving to the main highway without lights was something Henry had never done before, but he made it there quickly and gained some confidence. Turning on his lights, Henry entered the highway and sped toward the city and the sleeping Marge.

After parking the wagon several blocks from his home and making his way through side streets and several alleys, Henry stood in the shadows by the back door of the house. There he remained motionless for several long minutes to make sure that he had not been spotted by some nosy insomniac. Steeling his nerve he silently unlocked the door and entered the house.

The eerie stillness made him shiver and he stood in the kitchen until the chill left his body. Taking the cord from his pocket he wound it around his hands and jerked it tight. Making his way through the dark house, he crept to the stairway, being careful to walk on the side of the steps to prevent any creaking sounds from the stairs disturbing Marge as she slept. At the top of the stairs he froze when he thought he heard a footfall from Marge's bedroom. Shaking it off as a case of nerves, Henry tip-toed to the bedroom door. Placing his ear against the door he listened intently for any sound that would mean Marge was, for some reason, still awake. Only silence reached his ears. Jerking the cord tighter around his hands, Henry grasped the doorknob firmly and eased the door open quietly.

Marge slept on the near side of the bed, and Henry sighed with relief noting that the covers were not pulled over her head as they often were. The room was in total darkness except for a shaft of light that shone through the curtains and horizontally over Marge's bulk concealed by the covers. Henry moved quietly toward her. Ignoring the enormity of the acts he was intent on committing, Henry slipped the cord over Marge's head and looking down at her white flabby throat he saw the thin nylon cord that had already cut deeply into the rolls of fat. For the first time Henry noticed the bluish tone of her face and the protruding purple tongue that lankly hung from the side of her swollen lips.

Henry froze as the comical development struck him, a smile was just beginning to pucker his lips when he heard a slight sound behind him. The half-smile died on his face as the cord tightened around his throat. Henry made a great effort to speak, to yell, to plead, before the sea of darkness enveloped him and he slumped lifelessly to the floor.

The two police detectives stood surveying the gory sight of the Haller bedroom. Blood covered the walls and the bed on which lay the corpse of Marge Haller. Her funeral would be of the closed casket variety.

"Sure can't figure this one," the younger detective spoke to his partner, "it's different from the other ones."

The older detective stood silently for a moment before he spoke. "Looks like Mr. Haller came home for something and surprised the strangler in his wife's bedroom. He was sort of a little guy so I don't suppose he could have put up much of a fight . . . still," he continued, "I can't figure why the strangler used two different cords to strangle Mrs. Haller. It is different," he mused, "but all the same, the chief isn't going to like this one bit. Victims seven and eight!"

## A Stranger In My Town

by

Michael T. Barzone

While walking through four seasons in one  
And enjoying nature's magic show  
A thought disturbed my peace  
What if I were a foreigner  
A stranger in my town  
Oh, it's not new to me  
For I've seen them all  
From mighty metropolis to tiny hamlet  
But how would it be here —  
Here where I spent my youth  
For I know its very heart  
Yet what would I find if —  
If this were my first visit  
Would it be enjoyable  
Could I find my way  
And not worry night's coming  
What would I think of the town  
Its parks and other sights  
And most of all its people  
Were I a stranger in my town





Springer

Maggie Kay



C.J.

by

Richard N. Warner

C. J. was one of seven children. He was born in South Carolina, and for the first ten years of his life could remember no hardships. Everyone he knew had a one room tar-paper shack to live in and had plenty of beans and fat-back to eat. His only great problem in life was trying to figure out why his black friends with whom he played everyday didn't go to his school.

School was fun, and C. J. discovered he could go anywhere he wanted to and have great adventures if he used his imagination. He became very excited when his mother told him that they were moving. They were going North where his Pa could greatly improve their lot in life by working in a factory instead of scratching out a living on forty acres of sand and stone on shares for Mr. Cullpepper.

C. J.'s new home was located on the main street of a large city. C. J. was told by his mother that over two million people lived in this city. C. J. knew the city was large, but he was acquainted with only a very small portion of it — the block he lived on, the next block with the theater on it, and the six blocks he had to travel to school.

The new home was like an adventure in itself. You got water by turning a handle. You got light by flipping a switch. It was located on the second floor above a Coney Island restaurant; C. J. really enjoyed the smell of fine food cooking as it drifted up from the restaurant's kitchen located below his bedroom.

His bedroom was extremely hot in the summer, but he could escape the hot, humid heat by crawling out his bedroom window and sleeping out on the long sloping roof that covered the storage room behind the restaurant's kitchen. This had its drawbacks, because sometimes the rats, attracted by the sour smell of the garbage in the alley behind the restaurant, would climb to the roof and scamper across it. If C. J. pretended that he was sleeping out on the starlit prairie and that the rats were prairie dogs, the humid night became much more bearable.

C. J. was amazed. School was no longer a one room frame building, but a large three story brick building. Another surprise was that he was the only white boy in his room. Going to school was no longer a joy and an adventure but a matter of survival. His neck wasn't red, but the boys at school called him a red-neck. They also called him a pecker-wood hillbilly. He lost count of the times he was beaten up by the boys on the way home from school. His father didn't help. He would only beat him more and say, "Boy you can't let those niggers push you around." C. J. soon learned to keep his problems to himself.

C. J. had never hated in his life, but now the hatred started. He hated school, he hated the city, he even hated the change he noticed coming over his family. Pa worked nights, and Ma spent a lot of time at a bar down the block from his apartment. C. J. spent the nights taking care of his two younger sisters and his baby brother. His three older brothers had returned to South Carolina to live with their grandparents.

C. J. felt trapped, but he could escape by going to the theater down the street. He loved the westerns, and had firmly made up his mind that he was going to run away from home and become a cowboy.

Matters at home went from bad to worse. His Ma drank beer at home all day while Pa slept, then she drank at the bar with the guitar player from the band, while Pa worked nights. The fighting grew worse between the two, and seemed to reach a climax the morning Pa came home and informed Ma that he had been laid off. C. J. noticed that both of them now drank a lot, and that the fighting grew worse.

He remembered being woke up by a scream, and the neighbors yelling, "Call the police." The one police officer who appeared on the scene seemed to be a giant to C. J. The policeman towered over C. J. as he patted him on the head and informed him that he would have to be the man of the house for a while. "Your Mom cut your Dad, and she'll have to go with us." "Your Dad is fine. A few stitches and he'll be as good as new." "Well son you can't kill a hillbilly that easy."

Ma came home the next day and so did Pa. Pa only stayed long enough to pack his clothes and call his Ma a whore. He left never to be seen by C. J. again.

When C. J. wasn't at the movies, he played by himself on the roof of the theater. He discovered by pulling down on the fire escape he could climb to the roof as easy as walking up the steps to his own apartment. The white graveled roof wasn't just a roof, it became the sands of the desert. The rounded curve of the roof wasn't just another roof, it was the foothills of the badlands. The access door to the elevator shaft became a cave, a hide-out for him and his friend. He did have a friend; every cowboy has a sidekick. The only sad part was that C. J. had to become both people.

He stopped going to school, and his Ma never checked. He kept his gunbelt, holster, hat, lariat, and gun hidden in his cave. Every morning he would take his lunch and leave for school, but instead would go directly to his cave to meet his make-believe sidekick. They would saddle their horses, fight Indians, and capture rustlers all day. In the afternoon when he knew school was over, he would ride off into the sunset for home, because he knew he would have to babysit while his Ma went to the bar.

One beautiful morning in May he left home to keep his rendezvous with his trusted sidekick. They had been on the trail of a clever bunch of rustlers for over a month. C. J. was sure today they would close the trap on them.

C. J. was right. At high noon they caught up with them just outside their cave hideout. C. J. leaped from his horse, made the fastest draw of his six shooter he had ever made, and shot down all three of them. The first two died at once, but the third outlaw lived long enough to say in his dying declaration that C. J.'s trusted sidekick was the real true leader of the rustler gang.

For everything that C. J. had faced this was the greatest shock of his life. He had no alternative; his sidekick would have to pay for his crime. He would get no trial; he would be strung up to the nearest tree. C. J. fashioned the slip knot, threw his lariat over the tree limb, and placed the loop over his friend's head. He asked, "Do you have any last words before you die?" His sidekick looked him in the eye and

C. J. heard him say, "I understand what you must do and forgive you for it." C. J. could feel the tears come to his eyes. He thought of all the misery he faced in this strange place. He didn't hesitate. He put the lash to his sidekick's horse, and it was over.

Suddenly fantasy became reality. The foothills became a hot city roof; the bark of the prairie dogs became the squeals of the rats as they fought over his uneaten lunch; the roar of the wind through the canyon became the roar of rush hour traffic as the commuters fought their way home for the day. The screech of the vultures became the chatter of the starlings as they fought with the rats for their share of the lunch. Both the rats and the starlings would have plenty to eat for the next few months. As the sun set slowly in the west, C. J. never made it home for the first time since he had been in this city. His mother called the police to report her son missing, and called a neighbor to get a baby sitter for the evening.

The same two officers that answered the cutting run answered the missing person run. The tall officer asked, "What's up Blossom. Did your old man kick your fanny again?" "You guys really don't give a damn, do you?" "If you are looking for sympathy, Blossom, you'll find it half way between shit and syphilis in the dictionary honey. Now what's up?" Blossom said, "My kid is missing." "Which one?", asked the officer. "C. J.; he never came for supper." "When did you miss him; when you noticed you had an extra neck bone left after supper?" "Screw you cop, do you want to make a report or not?" "Ok, Blossom give me the information. If he comes home call us, if we find him we'll call you."

By a quirk of fate the tall officer, and C. J.'s path would cross once more. The absentee owners of inter-city buildings don't get too up-tight over a few things going wrong with their buildings as long as they can still collect the rent. When cornices start falling off, this means trouble. They might hit a person, who in turn might sue, so these repairs should be made at once. In September, some tiles fell off the parapet surrounding the roof of the theater. The owner hired two roofers to inspect the remaining tiles. He hated to spend the money on the building, but he sure as hell didn't want some crumb from the neighborhood getting rich by suing him. Once more the same two policemen received a Radio-Run — "Meet the men; they've found a body."

It was the first time that the tall officer had seen a skeleton wearing clothes. Something appeared familiar about the clothing. The officer could look down the alley and see where Blossom lived. The missing report filed and forgotten popped out from his subconscious mind; the missing report of C. J. could now be closed.

C. J. used to sing, "Bury me not on the lone prairie, instead he was buried in a teeming city. C. J. had discovered that life indeed can be more lonesome in the bustling city than on the lone prairie. It is an ordinary story set in an ordinary city. The story of a lonely boy; a mother who hopes he has run away to South Carolina to be with his father; a police department that is too busy to check on missing boys.



# War

by

Susan K. Whitsitt

Separated by an ocean and about half a century, Henry Fleming of Stephen Crane's **The Red Badge of Courage**, and Paul Baumer, of Erich Maria Remarque's **All Quiet on the Western Front**, would not be expected to have much in common. Granted, they were both youthful soldiers witnessing the horrors of war, but they were of different worlds and had different personalities. Somehow, however, the authors give the impression that these major differences matter not, because the events in which these young men were engaged produced reactions which are universal.

When Henry Fleming found himself at last realizing his dream of serving in the Union Army, he wondered what could have compelled him to enlist. Any excitement that he felt quickly gave way to his fears — of being killed, of turning coward, of failing to pass the "test of manhood." In this situation, none of the ideals that he had acquired over the years had any relevance whatsoever.

Somehow, the young farmboy managed to withstand the first battle. For its duration, he was not an individual, but part of a "great blue machine," mechanical, unfeeling, and at the mercy of a fever that he did not understand.

Afterward, he felt exultant, proud, and sure of himself, but his newly found confidence proved to be only temporary. His next test (the second battle) came too soon, and in his panic and dismay, Henry deserted his regiment. During his confused flight, the youth witnessed several of the ghastly effects of war, "the blood-swollen god," including the tragic death of a young boy that Henry had grown up with.

As a result of one of the youth's encounters, he received a head wound from being hit with the butt of a gun. Although this injury did not occur during actual combat, Henry felt that he could return to his regiment without being ridiculed. He had proven his worthiness by attaining a wound that represented his "red badge of courage," the mark that separated the self-assured veterans from the fresh, naive recruits. Thus, he painfully made his way back to camp with the help of an older soldier whom he met along the way.

By this time, Henry had seen it all, and whatever fear he had previously possessed was replaced by a blind rage against the victorious enemy. He stood up to the alien forces doggedly, gave encouragement to his weary comrades, and protected the flag of his nation. Through sheer determination, Henry and his companions turned the tables and salvaged the battle for the North. With the fighting finally over, and a Union victory achieved, the youth's nightmare was finished and he emerged a man.

Paul Baumer and his schoolmates did not share Henry's enthusiasm for becoming soldiers, rather they were persuaded to join the forces against the French by their idealistic schoolmaster. The young German and his friends were considered their country's "iron youth," a phrase which Paul found quite ironic. True, war had turned them to animals who acted on instinct, concerned only with survival; but their "youth" ended shortly after they donned their uniforms. When the time drew near to remove the soldier's garb, Paul could only describe himself and the other survivors as "weary, broken, burnt out, rootless, and without hope."

There is little wonder that Paul felt so completely destroyed . . . of the seven classmates that enlisted together, he was the only survivor. He was the witness to each horrible death of his camerades and still the war dragged on. And as each of Paul's friends died, a part of him died too . . . until the reasons for the war and his participation in it completely faded out of his memory. Finally, the death of "Kat," an older man who was Paul's dearest companion, completely obliterated any determination to live that Paul had possessed.

Thus, Paul never saw the end of the war or knew the tranquility of peace that Henry had found. Rather, he joined his companions and escaped the hell that made him, too, a man.

Both of these novels portrayed the atrocity of war and the effect it had on two average young men. Remarque's introduction to his novel says it very well:

This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped its shells, were destroyed by the war.

Obviously, the particular nationalities and generations of these two young men were of little consequence as they risked their lives for their respective countries. In each of these cases, valor was replaced by an animal instinct to fight for survival of the hell of war.

# Let's Not Forget From Whence We Came The Bicentennial and the Black Community 200 Years of American History

by

Robert Greer

Bicentennial celebrations burst into regal splendor, spectacular fanfare, and unparalleled magnificence on New Year's Day, nineteen hundred and seventy-six. Entrepreneurs and merchants anxiously and mercilessly anticipated the occasion to proffer their wares; the masses are being thrust into reverent roles to manifest their ideals of patriotism; and politicians will relentlessly pursue avenues to gain a one-upmanship edge over their opponents. Consequently, business as usual — the catalyst to spur the economy, the vital ingredients for people to keep faith in the Republic, and the omen of political drama for public elect to extol humbly extraordinary vision to resolve current problems, while auditing the accounts of their achievements. Such episodic ceremony and ritual come and go.

Let's not forget from whence we came — slavery

The question has been raised about whether black people should take part in celebrating America's birth. Many suggest that the occasion is a charade, steeped with piosity, and blacks should "Send Regrets." Some reason that blacks should participate to underscore Americana's affront to "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." Others insist that blacks should become involved in tribute to the price paid by ancestors, a debt which must not go unrecognized. Still others, who have not given serious thought to the question, will parrot and succumb to peer and environmental pressures. There is much to be said for such divergence. Given a certain amount of rationale and based on realistic determinism, I can accept these paradoxes.

Let's not forget from whence we came — Nat Turner

As for myself, I feel that the black citizenry should commit themselves passionately to the Bicentennial tenets. Blacks must reject passivism and the wild absurdity that history can be ignored, anymore than blacks can turn their backs on today's struggles, or tomorrow's aspirations. To say, "do not participate," is synonymous with "do not vote." Think about it.

Let's not forget from whence we came — George W. Carver

Blacks, by their mere presence, will superpose black perspectives upon the Bicentennial. In the past, blacks were indignant about societal exclusion. Now that inclusion is in the offing, do not blantly reject, or conditionalize participation. The legacy of our forefathers, who suffered, fought, labored, and died, enabled us to improve upon the contemporary standards of existence that we now enjoy, and to perpetuate a better life for our children. Their unrelenting struggle is our struggle, is our banner, and is our creed to advance the national passion of every American — freedom, worth, equality, meaningful employment, and a society void of despair, racism, hunger, illiteracy, and poverty.

Let's not forget from whence we came — W. E. B. Du Bois

Do not be lured into a state of complacency by the institutionalization of the Bicentennial. Let nothing divert your attention, or erode your beliefs and convictions about the dignity of man, of woman, or of children, regardless of



race, creed, or color. Avoid cynicism concerning the extraneous issues surrounding the Bicentennial, but recognize the duality of truth and hypocrisy in it. Accept not the pronouncements that the natural process of evolution is sufficient to achieve the self-evident truths, as defined in the Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

Let's not forget from whence we came — Harriet Tubman

1976 is the year to celebrate two hundred years of American history; yet, blacks do not share proportionately the fruits of its labor, past, or present. As a whole, our minds have been temporarily immobilized. We know what our problems are, but it seems that we are unable to summon the energy to overcome. We are seized by a kind of paralysis that has sapped our vitality. There have been some feeble calls to action, but specific proposals, however worthy of individual attention, seem too partial, palliative, or negative. Today, Black's chief pre-occupation is to survive in an environment of rising crime and drug addiction, racial inequalities, oppressive poverty, urban disasters, high unemployment, inflation, insurmountable abuses and fraud in social assistance programs, frequency of malfeasance by local and national elects, and "Domesday" adventures. It is like a waking nightmare for all people — black, white, and red.

Let's not forget from whence we came — Mary M. Bethune

I suggest that we confront the challenges of nineteen hundred and seventy-six, and hereafter, by redefining and identifying our priorities, altering our moods of inactivity, and deliberate for the accommodation of our needs with strength and humility.

Let's not forget from whence we came — Benjamin O. Davis

As a beginning, we should try to clarify our objectives by tracing, to the historical core, the presuppositions that underlie modern social-economic-technical levels. The black crisis is the product of an emerging democratic culture. The issue is whether a democratized America can integrate black concerns into its national policy. Presumably America cannot unless it rethinks its own axioms.

Let's not forget from whence we came — Martin L. King

One thing that blacks can do is to assert their rights, to unite in terms of brotherhood, to develop a fiscal policy, and to throw the weight of public opinion against segments of society that are unwilling to work toward the solution of our common problems. We need to understand that systemic responsibility is essential for the implementation of vigorous and purposeful programs. Our institutions of checks and balances, as well as the proliferation of exterior influences by self-interest groups, dilute the thrust of positive action. Institutions and social systems will not move unless challenged, and if persuasion is not administered by leaders of integrity, action rests with aroused citizens, or is prompted by a crisis. Unless we focus on meaningful fundamentals — to enhance the national good along with our own — our specific proposals may produce new backlashes more serious than those they are designed to remedy.

Let's not forget from whence we came — Malcolm X

We are not suffering from a paramnesia concerning modern-day social dilemmas. Rising crime and drug addiction are real, and must be met with positive action, in terms of police-community cooperation. Racial inequal-

ities cannot be legislated into oblivion. The answer lies within each of us, with the youth, and with the institutions of justice, education, and church. City managers, industry, unions, and community leaders must address themselves to indigenous problems within their immediate geographical areas. Unemployment, underemployment, and inflation have always been economic spin-offs of the administration in power. The problem of full employment escalates inflation, waste, and further depletes the withering bank of the world's natural resources. Yet, how can we rationalize, or ignore, the inequities of the "have-nots." A worthwhile solution may be found in shorter work weeks, systematic reduction of overtime, the number of jobs per person, or per household. Current costs of welfarism, regardless of the guise under which it exists, are insupportable, financially or socially. Valid cases are compatible with the humanitarian benevolence of society. But, flagrant abuses, fraud, and mis-management in social assistance programs are offensive to all people, and rightfully should be attacked. Domesday adventures, summarily in the name of profit, convenience, or compromise, are among the greatest threats that subjects the world to extinction. We are children of the universe, a part of, not apart from, all living things.

Let's not forget from whence we came — Medgar Evers

Except for notable exceptions, our local and national leaders have failed to equip us to cope with the gut problems. Rarely before, have we had such widespread distrust in our institutions and leadership, and said mistrust is not limited to radicals. We demand honesty in all leaders, especially black, who are responsive to people's needs, accountable for their deeds, and who must be stripped of support of their personal interest transcends the best interest of their constituents. We must exercise our inalienable rights of self-governing, but the first precept requires obedience, that is to vote.

Let's not forget from whence we came — Whitney Young

Black issues and concerns must be disseminated to the public at large. The most effective discriminating vehicle used against blacks is the media. They ignore, play down, confuse the issues, and exploit differing black opinions when meaningful black perspectives are in evidence with national impact. However, I submit that national exposure of gut issues — black, white, or red — are paramount to the nation's well-being. For without such airing, ignorance breeds suspicion, nourishes distrust, and ferments the seeds of strife.

Let's not forget from whence we came — James E. Chaney

The moral consciousness of America needs to be re-awakened during this Bicentennial. Black contributions of the past have been instrumental in America's predominance. The Bicentennial provides a unique opportunity for black Americans to exalt our frustrations and optimism, our fears and faith, and our tolerance and aspirations. We are indeed a part of the American heritage, "for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, until death do us part."

Let's not forget from whence we came.



*Kathy Gramer*

Old Man

Kathy Gramer



## 20,000 DM

by

Mike Malloreay

In Heinrich Boll's short story, "Like A Bad Dream," he illustrates how people often turn life into a bad dream by cheating, lying, and stealing all for the sake of money. He also shows how easily a person can be drawn into shady deals when there is money involved. He exemplifies how today's money-hungry society places the value of materials much higher than the traditional moral and social standards. Boll is not saying that it is like this for everyone but that all too often life is turned into a nightmare for those who complicate it with misplaced values.

Heinrich Boll gives a very effective clue to the theme of this story in his title, "Like A Bad Dream." He goes on to clarify his view of life mainly by the actions and reactions of his nameless narrator. Boll isn't saying that life is full of monsters and haunted houses, but he is, however, comparing the surrealistic drama and tense atmosphere which is present in both "bad dreams" and the lives of his characters.

The story begins with the narrator telling the story of his dinner date with a Mr. Zumpen. The dinner is being held at the narrator's house with the unproclaimed but rather obvious purpose of persuading Zumpen to award a large building contract to the host's excavating business. This is a highly questionable arrangement since bids had already been placed on the contract.

Awaiting the guest's arrival he worries explaining "I was tense that evening, but . . . my wife reassured me." He tells how he paces from window to window, watching and waiting. He has reservations about the arrangement and considers it improper, as is shown by his statement "The fact that the big contract I was involved in was being awarded tomorrow . . . must have made the whole thing as embarrassing to him as it was to me."

Once the guests arrive their host goes to great lengths to impress them, however, as the evening progresses the atmosphere becomes increasingly tense. "For two minutes there was absolute silence . . . and we all thought about the contract." The Zumpens finally leave without ever discussing the very purpose of the visit, because no one knew how to bring up the subject. The whole evening had been a pretentious effort to be friendly to gain the contract, a situation which only succeeded in making both parties uncomfortable and tense.

Although the Zumpens had left, the nightmare was not yet over. Bertha insists that her husband pursue the matter by visiting the Zumpens that same evening. The narrator becomes increasingly upset. "For the first time I noticed how wide and primitive that mouth is . . . I could have kissed her, . . . but I didn't."

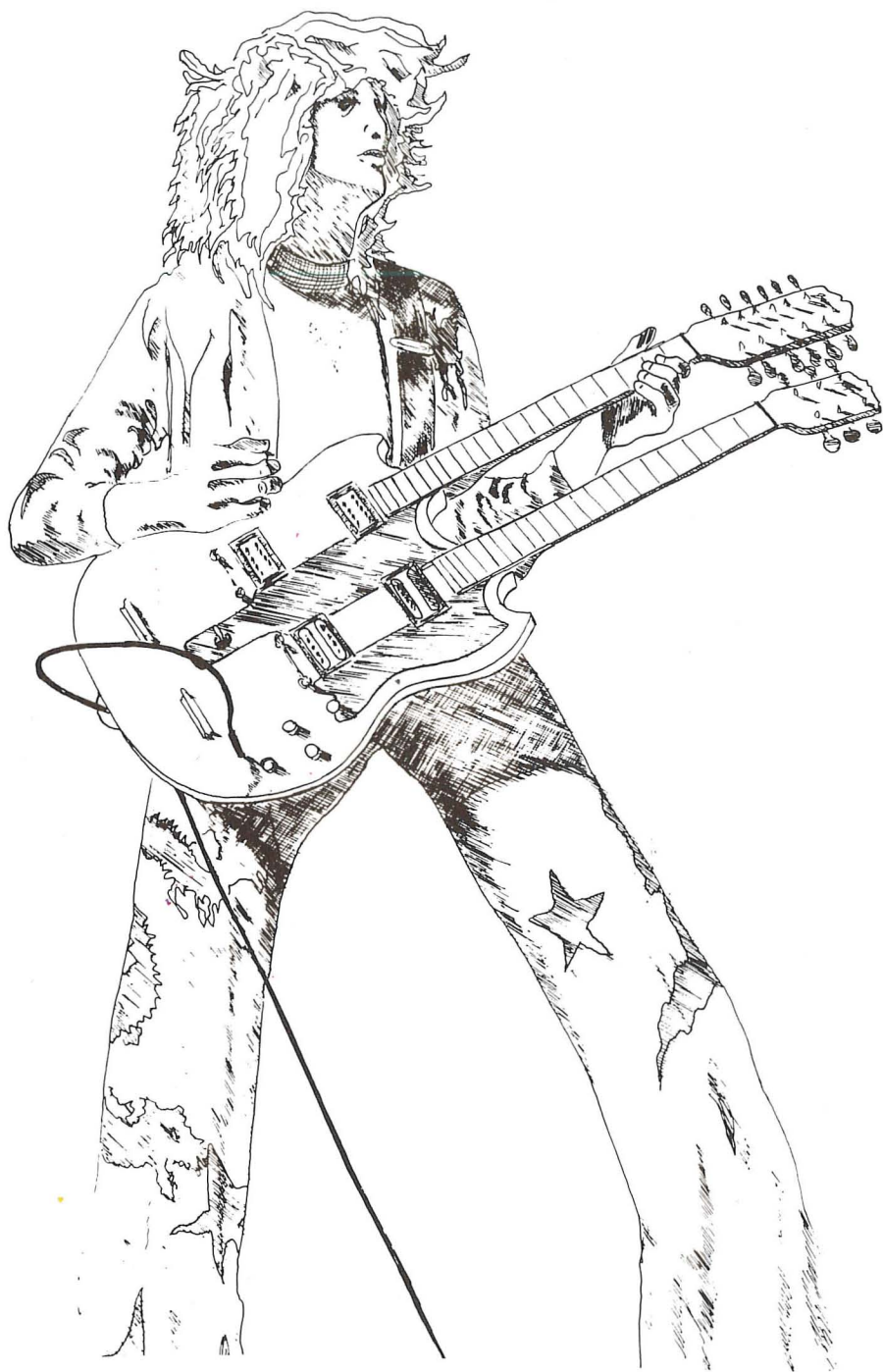
When they arrive at the Zumpen's they find that he is out, but his wife is home so they decide to talk to her about the contract. Mrs. Zumpen, of course, knows the purpose of their visit and shows them the folder containing the bids for the contract. To his great surprise the narrator

discovers that his bid had been the lowest all along. This is not yet the end of his nightmare, however, for Mrs. Zumpen requests that they raise the price of their bid and pay Zumpens most of the resulting profit. The narrator fails to grasp what is happening but his wife understands perfectly and alters the bid because, as her husband explains "I was in too much of a turmoil . . ."

After completing this extra-legal task they return home where the narrator is involved in deep thought. "I was wondering about something," he explains, "but I couldn't put my finger on what I was wondering about." His thoughts are interrupted by a telephone call from Mr. Zumpen, who had discovered that Bertha had raised the bid more than she had been instructed to, resulting in more profit for her and her husband. He tells Zumpen that Bertha had done it with his consent, which was a lie but shows that he is finally realizing the ways of business. It is also at this point that he realizes what it was that he had been wondering about. "It's like a bad dream, that's what it's like," he observes, but he fails to do any more about the situation than observe and go along.

Although he finally saw that the situation was a ridiculous one, he failed to see why, as is shown by his final statement, "But I never did understand. It is beyond understanding." His wife understood perfectly and so did the Zumpens, because they were resigned to the belief that this was the way people do business. Their view of life was based on materialistic values and a desire to obtain everything they could, despite the cost to others. Their lives revolve around material things such as antique rococo cabinets, baroque Madonnas, and 18th century crucifixes, not because of their religious value or for their age, but because of their monetary value and usefulness in impressing people. Bertha observes in the story that "life consists of making compromises and concessions" but her actual meaning is that life, to her, consists of giving a little and taking a lot.

Bertha's husband is the only character who displays any reservations about the manner in which they conduct business. He claims that he never did understand, but perhaps the truth of it is that he didn't want to understand. He may not have liked the situation, but he certainly didn't object. The anonymous narrator is not the main character in this story. It is the 20,000 marks!



Jimi Page

John Steinborn



# The Significance of the Re-Birth Cycle

by

Mary Lloyd

The reality and significance of life is conceived through and in the realm of physical existence. It forms, like an embryo, in the womb of the world, awaiting the time of its functional completion. Man's development in the cycle of life, as that of the fetus in its mother's womb, is nourished and made whole in preparation for an ultimate independent survival. At last, the birth of a new entity, like that of a new child, is witnessed as a phenomenon of beauty, accompanied by pain and accomplished through the need for further expansion and growth. Life, in the sense of an abstract being, is born through the combined efforts of its mother — "suffering" — and its father — "awareness" — and is given the eternal name of "meaning."

The formation of this most sacred child occurs within the life of man while he struggles and grows in his physical world. Ironically, from man's point of view, this re-birth usually takes place as he nears his physical death, leaving him little time (if any) to contemplate his "new self". Yet, for some, "meaning" is begat in a sort of "premature" birth, enabling the newly formed being to experience new growth in an altered state of his physical existence. As the child of life encounters the transforming process, it becomes painfully evident that he is ahead of schedule. This delicate little sibling, born through suffering and bearing the traits of awareness, finds himself out of place in his once familiar surroundings.

Of the premature babes that have completed the first cycle of their existence, and entered into a new order, a minority have successfully attempted to explain both the process and the experience that brought them to their present state. One very sensitive example is found in the writings of Louis Evely, an ex-communicated Catholic priest who has spent the major part of his life trying to bridge gaps of understanding. In an essay on "suffering", Evely captures the atmosphere of the pains of labor that precede the birth of meaning:

Suffering and death are the only unavoidable obstacles which compel the most mediocre man to call himself into question, and to ask him what would permit him to transcend it. What neither love, nor prayer, nor poetry, nor art could do for most people, only death and suffering are capable of demanding.<sup>1</sup>

Evely reflects the understandings that few ever obtain in their functional lifetime, and thus, he, and others like him, become strangers to their fellow man.

Artisans who have experienced the total metamorphosis of life often attempt to relay or express the essence of their new being through the tools of their trade. Having acquired the missing dimension of meaning through the phenomenon of re-birth, painters, musicians, and writers perform and compose with profound depth. Often though, the richness of their work is truly meaningful only to those who have also experienced the pain and suffering of transformation.

Of the arts, the most evident and widely circulated outlet for the "re-born child" to define and express himself is found through and in writing. Amongst the list of suffering's children, who compose and create through words, are the gifted minds of Sartre, Tolstoy, Emerson, Evely, Baldwin, and Porter — only a fraction of those who represent and define the presence of a world within a world.

The Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, in one of his familiar short stories, "The Death of Ivan Ilych," portrayed the life and death of his main character within the actual pattern of the re-birth cycle. Tolstoy depicted the process of suffering and awareness that gave way to a new entity as the physical life of his character was fading out. Ivan Ilych, who had previously lived a superficial and sterile life style, was dying in the hands of a horrible and wretched illness. As he was being drained of his physical life, he began to enter the stages of a new birth — he was becoming aware:

In them he saw himself — all that for which he had lived — and saw clearly that it was not real at all, but a terrible and huge deception which had hidden both life and death.<sup>2</sup>

Ilych was slowly leaving his mother's womb, adding with every movement and pain of birth, new understanding and depth. As he began to breathe his last mortal breaths of air, he simultaneously inhaled the first taste of a new life. He suddenly understood where and what he was and was no longer afraid to enter into an altered state:

"And death . . . where is it?" — He sought his former accustomed fear of death and did not find it. "Where is it? What death?" There was no fear, because there was no death. In place of death there was light.<sup>3</sup>

At last, Ilych understood the process of transformation and the new beginning that was accompanying his mortal end.

Jean-Paul Sartre, a French existentialist, transmitted, in similar fashion, the seemingly induced re-birth that often accompanies the threat of physical existence. Through the use of his main character, Pablo Ibbieta, in the short story entitled "The Wall," Sartre expresses the feelings that accompanied the premature birth of one of the sons of awareness. Ibbieta, a Spanish revolutionary whose captured life was to end in a number of hours at the mercy of a firing squad, reflected upon his situation in light of the understanding that was forming in his being:

I saw my life before me, finished, closed, like a bag, and yet what was inside was not finished.<sup>4</sup>

There existed around Pablo Ibbieta the threat of death, which, perhaps, partially induced and finally gave way to the dimension of meaning born into his life. In the realization of his possible death, in conjunction with the birth of a new self, Ibbieta was re-born, like Ivan Ilych, as a child of suffering. Sartre portrays the life of his character, which he himself defines, as it is coming into being:

Naturally, I couldn't think clearly about my death, but I saw it everywhere, even on the different objects, the way they had withdrawn and kept their distance, tactfully, like people talking at the bedside of a dying person.<sup>5</sup>

Jean-Paul Sartre understands, and his character, through him, portrays that understanding, but still he takes on the image of a rebellious child as he enters into the sphere of a new existence. Sartre lays bare his doubt of any form of life beyond the physical, alluding to a sad belief that even the new birth ends with the last breath of literal air. His despair becomes evident in the statement:

A few hours, or a few years of waiting are all the same, when you've lost the illusion of being eternal.<sup>6</sup>



Sartre's story ends with the life of his character being spared (through the use of irony: Ibbieta, who had intended to sacrifice his own, to save the life of a comrade, lived, while the comrade died) and simultaneously transforming into a babe in a new reality, yet remaining rebellious and unsure. Such a plight is certain to encounter a hard "childhood" as the reborn entity grows and expands in understanding.

Another instance of a premature birth that appears destined to encounter a difficult childhood is clearly illustrated by the American writer, Katherine Anne Porter. In one of her stories, "Flowering Judas", she resounds with the cool resistance through which her woman revolutionary approaches re-birth. As the womb of the world begins to rumble with the movement of forth-coming life, Laura, the unemotional school teacher, and secret Mexican revolutionary, attempts to withdraw from the destiny she must face. While the pains of labor grow progressively more intent, she struggles to hide within herself:

Numbers tick in her brain like little clocks, soundless doors close of themselves around her. If you would sleep, you must not remember anything, the children will say tomorrow, good morning teacher, the poor prisoners who come everyday bringing flowers to their jailer. 1-2-3-4-5 — it is monstrous to confuse love with revolution, night with day, life with death — ah, Eugenio!<sup>7</sup>

Laura's attempt to disregard the interwoven relatedness of the entities of night and day and, more significantly, life and death, by means of contrasting the emotion of love and the state of revolution, only amplifies her fear of facing reality. Even when she has finally left the womb and her umbilical cord has been cut, symbolizing her as an independent child of meaning, she views her situation through a light of understanding, shadowed with rebellion.

The scales of imbalance, however, are leveled by those who view both literal and symbolic death as new beginnings obtained through the re-uniting of a finite source and a higher reality. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a noted transcendentalist, while reflecting in an essay on "Heroism", eloquently depicts the fate of the guileless child who, being born of maternal suffering in a physical existence, follows death into a phase beyond the understanding of "life" as it is humanly known. Death, in this sense, becomes a rest from the anguish and agony that, inevitably, would continue in the physical world:

Who does not sometimes envy the good and brave who are no more to suffer from the tumults of the natural world, and await with curious complacency the speedy term of his own conversion with finite nature?<sup>8</sup>

In Emerson's analogy, life does not end with death, but merely begins something of a different nature. The same holds true for the self that dies as it is simultaneously re-born to a higher form of understanding and meaning.

\* Re-born in the womb of the Harlem ghetto, still another child cries out his name to the world. James Baldwin, a black American author, whose insight pours freely and endlessly out of his soul, speaks without reserve of the truth and reality of the re-birth. In his revealing story, "Sonny's Blues," Baldwin relates the plight of a young black man in his "self-escape" out of New York's infamous Harlem. Sonny, in his search for freedom, was re-born and, through his need to express his new self, entered into the field of music where he spoke his name of meaning to the captive audience of ivory keys. His premature birth meant more struggling against the physical world of which he now found himself detached. But, due to the awareness that had formed such an integral part of him, he was prepared to encounter any fate.



As Sonny was progressing in the process of new growth, he was spontaneously feeding life with meaning as a form of sustenance:

And he was giving it back, as everything must be given back, so that, passing through death, it can live forever.<sup>9</sup>

Baldwin's understanding of life echoes strongly through the story image of Sonny, whose character truly defines meaning.

The reality of life through death, in both a real and abstract concept, becomes the manna that sustains the siblings of "suffering" and "awareness" in the wilderness of the physical world. For the minority that constitute the children of meaning, from the "Evelys" to the "Baldwins", and all that fall between, life is a world, rotating independently, within another world. While man, then, lives in the world as he conceives it, it simultaneously conceives **him**, like an embryo, in preparation for the completion of the cycle of re-birth. For most, re-birth comes with the expiration of the physical form, but for some a "premature" birth enables an immediate contemplation, growth and expression of a new self. Those who have undergone the pains of re-birth in this world have, in doing so, stepped into another dimension in which they have seen and experienced a portion of the "promised land."

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Louis Evely, "Suffering", **Listen to Love** (Regina Press, n.d.), p. 80.

<sup>2</sup>Leo Tolstoy, "The Death of Ivan Ilych", **Trio** (Harper and Row, 1975), p. 322.

<sup>3</sup>Tolstoy, p. 324.

<sup>4</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Wall", **Trio** (Harper and Row, 1975), p. 167.

<sup>5</sup>Sartre, p. 168.

<sup>6</sup>Satre, p. 168.

<sup>7</sup>Katherine Anne Porter, "Flowering Judas", **Trio** (Harper and Row, 1975), p. 135.

<sup>8</sup>Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Heroism", **The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson** (Random House, Inc., 1950), p. 260.

<sup>9</sup>James Baldwin, "Sonny's Blues", **Trio** (Harper and Row, 1975), p. 104.

by

Thomas J. McKenzie

The electronic cyclops  
winks its multicolored eye  
and spews persuasive insults  
to a room cluttered with toys;  
Used inside-out newspapers  
cover up some stale beer cans  
but the couple on the floor  
are wholly oblivious;  
They squirm like siamese worms  
laughing grunting and sighing  
then one shuts off the tv  
and says let's go to bed.

## Amsterdam West (Rude Awakening)

by

Ricky D. Mitchell

Hardly any sleep at all, I must be mad, who else would wake like this? Did I meet you in a hotel bar, or were there other lips I kissed? Do I love you? I don't even know if I like you, It's just that I lost my head again. Oh please don't speak to me in Dutch, that would really be the end.

Your bed's too short, and you're too long. I'm sorry I feel this way. I know that you were nice enough to take me in, when I needed a place to stay. Whose baby is that? Oh, some GI's, he was gonna take you to the states. Yea, probably on the family plan to get the better rates.

How far am I from where I was, or where was I when you found me? Some hotel in Amsterdam, oh now I think I see. But what hotel, you know my bags are gone. Did I register, or didn't I stay that long? You don't know, well that's great. God help me to be strong.

Where are my pants? Where am I? Would you lead me to the door. My God it's a high rise, and I think you've trapped me on the 18th floor. Well thanks again, don't grab my arm, and please don't speak to me in Dutch. I'm wondering how much a man can take, I wonder just how much.



## Moon Over Lagoon

Donald Taylor

## Black Oak's Tale

by

Annette Grimsby

Come, if you wish, my little friends, for it's a fine winter's day, and I feel a story coming on. What's that? Little Elm, would I tell you a tale of long ago. And yes, small Hickory, tell what happened during the big winds. Well now, let me see. All right, young-uns, set yourselves down a spell and listen carefully.

Way back, over a hundred years ago, when I was still a young sprout, I lived by a fine lake with my parents and all my friends. It was quiet and peaceful there. Day after day, all I had to do was grow tall and straight.

One spring day a group of people came my way. They stopped along side me, looked me up and down, and never seemed to stop talking. From what I could gather, they thought I was some tree. In a little while, they turned and left.

A few days later these same people came again, but this time they frightened the wits out of me. They started to dig all around me, and the first thing I knew, they were pulling me right up from my home. They quickly stuck me, dirt and all, into a wet basket, then they placed something right



over my top leaves, so I couldn't see the sky. I felt myself moving. Why, I was shaking so, I couldn't stop my leaves from rattling.

After what seemed the longest time, they finally took my covering off, and I discovered they were placing me into a fine newly dug hole. Gentle they were, but I was still so scared that I shut my eyes as tight as could be.

When I finally got up enough courage, I slowly opened my eyes, and looked around. The first thing I noticed was that I was near another group of trees. They were hickory, but it didn't matter, they were still my kind. Glancing to my right, I saw a large group of assorted buildings, on my left was a covered platform. Music was coming from the platform, and people were making all sorts of noise. One of the young hickories bent over and whispered to me that the people had planted me by their bandstand so they would have shade when I grew up. Right then and there I decided I liked my new home.

The years went by, and I grew in leaps and bounds. I also became more familiar with my surroundings. I had been planted in the middle of a large picnic area just on the outskirts of a small town. A nice friendly spot, where people came to visit with each other, enjoy the day, then leave for home.

Once a year, a great many people would come to the grove. Oh, how I enjoyed that day, what a celebration, what excitement. Would you believe that sometimes over three hundred people would be at the picnic. They came on trains, on foot, by horseback and wagons. Bringing lunches, they stayed the full day, while the band played and children frolicked. Sometimes, even the "governor" would come. Arriving by fancy train, he would make a speech, and then mingle through the crowd.<sup>1</sup> After everyone left, I was usually a little sad as I really enjoyed the noise and activity that always seemed to go with this special day.

One fall, just as I was getting ready to go into my long winter's sleep, I could feel a big storm brewing. It started out as a regular snowstorm, but by the second day it showed no sign of letting up, in fact it was getting worse by the hour. Full gale winds were whipping my friends and I back and forth, showing no mercy. By late afternoon we were all tired but the worst was still to come. Blowing across all the land came a wind of hurricane force, tearing up most everything in its path. Hitting the grove, it tore some of my friends up by the roots. Thankfully, I was still young and strong so I was able to hang on firmly to the ground, thereby saving myself. After the storm, I looked around and discovered that not only were most of my friends gone, but that most of the town buildings were gone also.<sup>2</sup> Tears started flowing down my trunk because there wasn't anything I could do to help.

If the storm wasn't bad enough, a few days later a fire broke out at one of the wrecked buildings, and soon the town was ablaze. Soon after, I sadly watched the people leave. Sometimes alone, sometimes three or four wagons together, they would take what possessions they still had and start for better places. When the big picnic day rolled around again, only a handful of people showed up. The following year none, I was alone in the middle of nowhere.

Years passed. I was now in my prime. One day I noticed a family and not too far away. They were starting to build a home. Oh, if only they would come to visit me once in a while. The days wore on and I noticed the man starting to clear ground. He was a farmer! In fear, I waited for him to deliver that killing stroke with his ax, but much to my surprise he instead came to rest under my branches. Can you imagine how relieved I felt? I could have jumped for joy.

Older and larger I grew as time marched on. Families came and families left. The landscape changed. It was now a regular peaceful farming community. I still offered my shade to anyone who would sit by me, but few came. Finally, I was left all alone with nothing but memories.

More years passed, I was now an old giant, sleeping peacefully and reminiscing on bright sunny days. Then one day I noticed people looking up at me. They were saying how grand I was and how my shade covered such a large area. The house in the distance soon seemed to come to life and children were once again climbing all over my limbs. Once again, every summer, I had large gatherings under my boughs. How happy I was, I had a family!

Then just when my hopes were the highest, on a spring evening, I looked up at the sky and noticed it turning an orangish-gray color. Suddenly the temperature dropped and everything became still, even the little birds were quiet. All of a sudden, cold ice fell from the sky. The wind began to blow with such fury that I became cold to the core. I knew I was too old to stand up to such force. Out of the Northeast, a dark black funnel appeared, heading straight for me. Shaking, I began to pray.

The tornado hit. I could feel it twisting every limb in my body. I held out as long as I could but my strength failed me. With terrible pain I split in two and my crown came crashing down. When it was all over, I hurt so bad that I hoped death would come quickly.

But that was not to be my fate. The people from the house came soon after the storm, and patched me up the best they could. Of course, I looked nothing like I used to, now being bent and twisted, as only part of me was worth saving. But that's another story.

Well my little friends, I see that the sun is leaving us, and I'm getting sort of tired, so if you don't mind, let's call it quits for today. Tomorrow is yet another day and I feel I'll still be around for quite a spell to spin many a yarn, so goodnight.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Verified by Mich. Thumb history and checked personally. I found an oldtimer who remembered coming to the picnic as a child by horse and wagon.

<sup>2</sup>Fred Landon's **Lake Huron History** — "cyclone force winds (100 m.p.h.), one of the worst storms recorded." "Nov. 1913"

# Christmas Time

by

Colleen Mackey

The cold December wind followed her into the room. I glanced up from my work at the desk as the chill reached me and smiled when I recognized the old woman. This was one of my favorite patrons. As she stopped to look at the magazines, I spoke.

"Hello, Mrs. Schlemer. How are you today?"

"Fine, thank you. And you?"

"Oh, just fine."

"My, but it's cold out there."

"It sure is."

I watched her as she chose an **American Heritage** and walked slowly back to her favorite section of books — the antiques. I knew which book she would finally choose to check out — **American Antiques**. Yet she would look through them all before bringing that one to the desk.

She stood patiently while I checked out the books of the people ahead of her. When finally it was her turn, she let the people behind her go first, saying she had all the time in the world and they looked as if they were in a hurry.

She smiled at me as she handed me her books and her gray-blue eyes, magnified many times by her glasses, glowed warmly. We spoke of inconsequential things — the weather, her books, what a nice library it was. Then I asked her how she was going to spend her Christmas Day.

Her great eyes filled with tears as she replied, "Christmas is a family time but I have no family. My husband is dead, I don't have any children, and my brothers and sisters are gone. I'll be alone."

Then she tried to laugh and relieve the heaviness of the moment by saying, "Ah, but you don't want to hear my troubles. I'm just an old woman carrying on. I should be happy, I have my dog and God. I'll go to Mass and cook a good dinner and the day will pass. Be glad you have a nice family and have a nice day."

As she walked slowly to the door I bit my lip to keep from bursting into tears. This sweet old lady cared so much about others. She frequently told us to call her if someone needed a book she had checked out, and she would return it. She was one person who should never have to be lonely and yet Christmas Day would drag on forever for her.

I resolved to do something special to brighten her day. I thought of sending her a card. But what was so special about that? Maybe I could send her a gift. But that seemed so impersonal. Finally, I had it! On Christmas Day I would take her a basket of candy and fruit and stay and talk with her for awhile. I felt much better when I had the solution.

That Christmas Day followed our much loved ritual. Everyone waking early, opening their gifts one person at a time, stretching the morning out, then eating a big dinner later on. I thought of Mrs. Schlemer and my promise to myself. As the day drew later I became reluctant to go see her. I made excuses to myself. It was snowing — not really hard, I'll admit — but who





The Monster Mash

Barbara Dunn

knew, it could turn into a blizzard. And besides, what would I talk about? I didn't really know her that well. What if she started crying again? And I knew she'd make a big fuss about my visiting her. "Well, you can always go next year," I told myself. And so justifying my action — or should I say non-action? — I convinced myself I was doing what was best.

But there is not always a next year. Mrs. Schlemer died of a heart attack in January.

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## La mujer ideal

by

Susanna Defever

Para todo el mundo  
la mujer es la madre:

la madre de los niños,  
la madre de los hombres,  
la madre de la tierra fecunda.

En varios países de vez en cuando  
los gentes reverenciaban a la mujer:

la mujer bonita, la mujer inteligente,  
la mujer comprensiva y misericordiosa,  
la mujer misteriosa e íntegra.

¡Tal adoración no es buena  
para la mujer humana!

En realidad, ella se contraerá de ella misma,  
se contraerá de queridos amigos,  
se contraerá del mundo total  
¡una diosa fría!

La mujer ideal  
no es la mujer real.

Permítele vivir  
lado a lado;  
Permítele vivir  
contigo — su compañero.

¡Qué felicidad!  
Para todo el mundo.





Lake Michigan Sunset

Maggie Kay



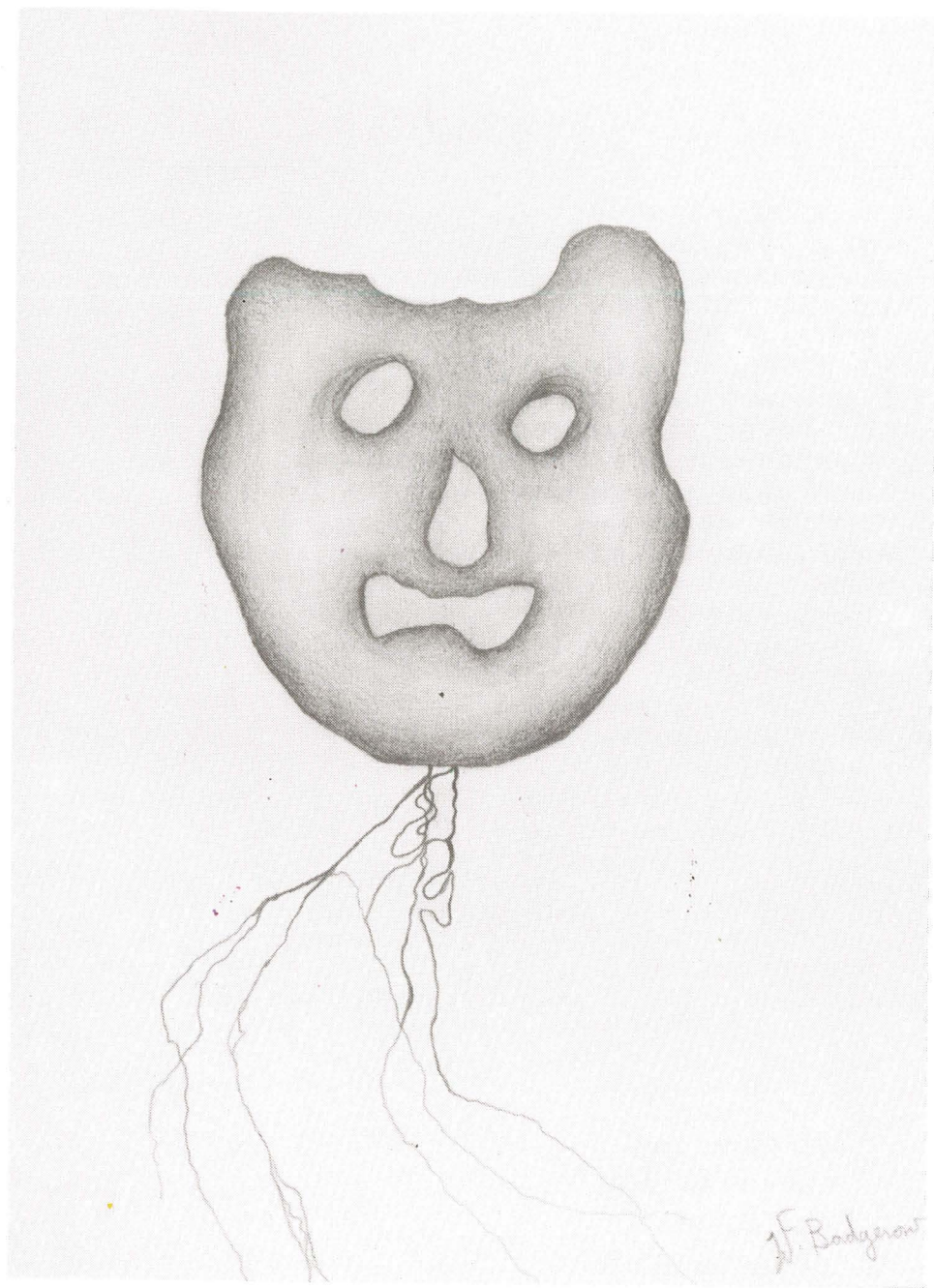
by  
janna leigh heltman

I am a false pretense  
I am an incongruity within myself  
    an incongruity within my situation:  
a stranger within my life  
    within my depths.  
I should be the rust on a steel chain,  
grating against freezing concrete.  
I should be a cigarette butt being blown about  
this sad and empty street by winter evening winds.  
I should be the graffiti desecrating a church  
in black and evil letters —  
smearing in pounding rain —  
my face  
my mask — running  
    I am running —  
and I wish I were  
the color of rose in the dusky sky,  
(the final good-bye of the sunset)  
I could make my rounds  
to spit upon this world with night;  
drowning in every tear that falls,  
dying in every wound that heals —  
leaving a scar.

## “Never say you’re mine”

by  
eric e. malooley

“i” do not love “you”.  
“you” do not love “me”.  
I am, In Love, with You.  
You are, In Love, with Me.  
We are, In Love, with Each other.  
We are One, In Love.  
    We are In Love.  
    We are Love.



Floating Forms

Walter Badgerow

## On Writing A Poem

by

Thomas J. McKenzie

Everytime I undertake the writing of a poem,  
It becomes a journey with its climax quite unknown.  
The first thing I consider is what I want to say;  
Let it run around my brain about a half a day.  
Next select the rhythm and pick out some metered feet.  
Jot them with a rhyming scheme upon a virgin sheet.  
Fill the space with chosen words and then to my surprise,  
Something unexpected now evolves before my eyes.  
Off' times I say what I planned to say and off' times not;  
Many times it is so bad I'd like to let it rot.  
So it is that journey's end for almost every poem  
Is a bonfire burning in the backyard of our home.  
But there is one final step in my poem writing plan:  
I sit down with pad and pen and start to write again.

## Emotional Colors

by

Judy A. Cuthbertson

Blood red, anger,  
searing through my heart.  
Royal blue, hate,  
knifing through my soul.  
Canary yellow, insecure,  
shaking through my body.  
Snow white, love,  
kissing all my faults.





Girl With A Twig

Connie Robinson

## An Innocent Victim

by

Beth Thurston

The core of evil  
Hidden amongst men  
Deep-seated, intertwined  
Hardly to be found.  
A devotee that's known  
To knife and stab  
Behind ones back  
Until the victim dead . . . or dying.  
When will they be repaid  
Or will they?  
Does God really punish  
Such abhorrent rogues?  
Prove it, show it.  
Let thine eyes see  
For believing is seeing  
And lifeless eyes can not.

Tao

by

eric e. malooley

Dreaming of pathways  
pure and clear —  
We are blind to the Path  
which has always been here.  
No matter the stumbling — the spills  
and the falls,  
the playing by ear of incessant calls,  
We cannot wander  
amiss or go stray.  
Each step that we take —  
in accord with the Way.



La Chouchette

Laurie Ann Guest



## Midnight Fantasies

by

Jeanine Faust

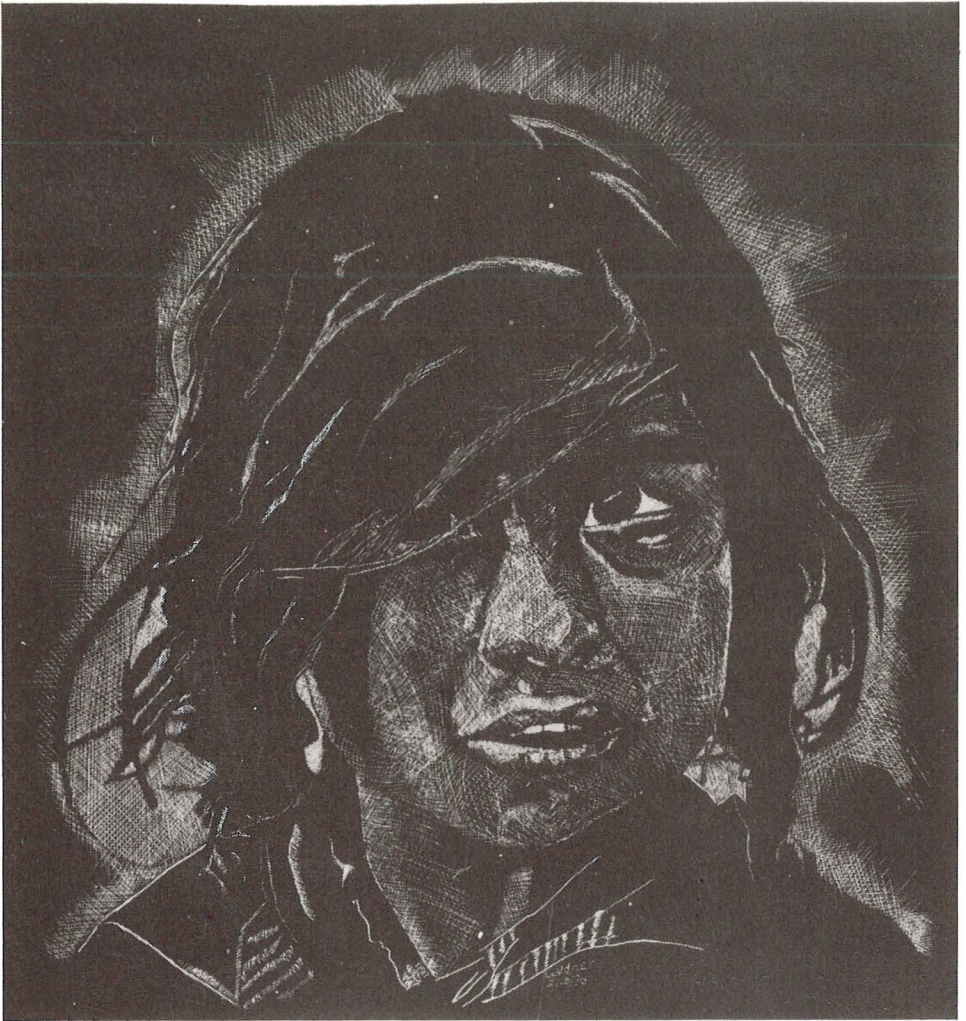
Looking out the window I see the shadows fall  
The trees their ghostly figures against the fence and wall  
The moon casts perfect pictures onto the hills of snow  
With dots of shadow here and there that mark where fences go.  
The trees their skinny fingers resemble pencil lines  
Upon the snow white paper drawn by the hands of time.  
A black cat breaks the stillness, her night time vigil kept  
And leaves some tiny pin points to show us where she crept.  
And when the dawn brings morning and with the stillness rings  
The sunshine glowing all around will show us different things;  
The pinpoints simply cat tracks, and pencil sketches; trees.  
The sun shows things as things they are; not as our fantasies.

## La leccion

by

Susanna Defever

El poeta nos dice:  
¡Qué breve es la vida!  
¿Porque está usted triste?  
Es lástima, iqué lástima!  
Siente los vientos calientes de primavera,  
Ellos calmarán sus miedos.  
Escucha las canciones de las aves,  
Ellas cantarán con simpatía y esperanza.  
Espera por la mañana  
Aliviará hoy  
a una memoria de ayer.  
Recuerda —  
Sonreírse es reírse  
y vivir.



The Waif

Lori Wildner

## Fog

by

Judy A. Cuthbertson

Fog,  
gray,  
entwining its fingers around you,  
enveloping you in a beautiful,  
mysterious,  
nothingness.

## Motionless

by

eric e. malooley

Some are blinded by the light  
of temporal joy.  
Some are lost in the darkness  
of illusory sorrow.  
    Why be affected by such trifles?  
    Life passes by my window  
    pane leaving joy  
    leaving pain  
    leaving too.  
The sun shines by day —  
The moon glows at night.  
And I, unchanged, observe them both.

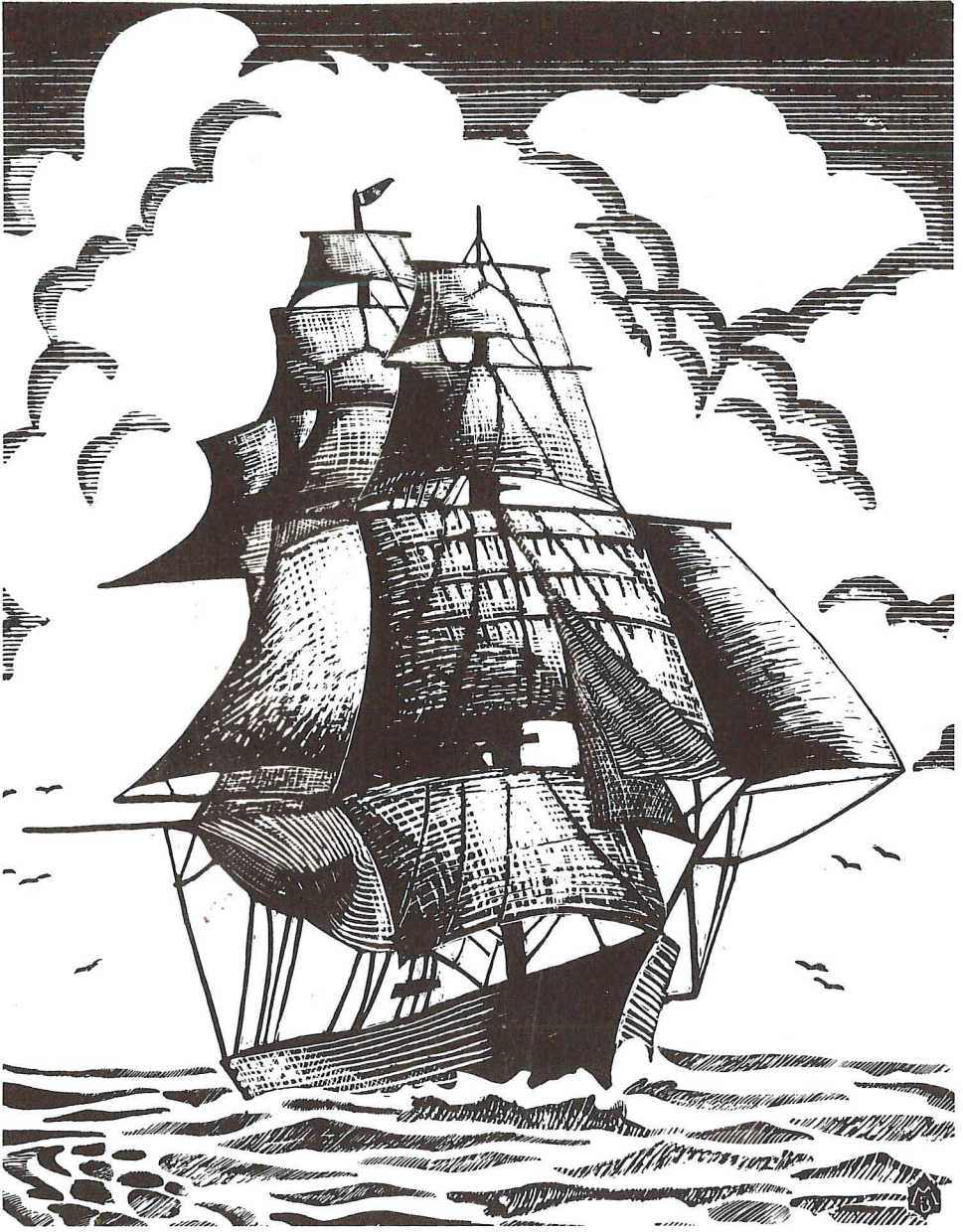
## the cold night slithers

by

janna leigh heltman

. . . the cold night slithers  
over cloudless skies,  
frightening the final glow of sunset  
from view;  
in this measured silence,  
i wait for you;  
screaming black  
and bleeding blue;  
scraping time  
and yesterday's grime  
from underneath my fingernails;  
picking at the scabs and scales  
of wounds too harsh to heal  
in this lifetime  
or my next . . .





The Blood Vessel

Matt Blood

# His Way

by

Michael T. Barzone

Thet said, "We teach His way"  
And so I followed as the law  
Until I learned to question  
But others, too, did say the same  
And did follow Him their way  
Could all be wrong, or right  
I had to find the answers  
Some said, "Look here or there"  
Some said, "Why look at all"  
Others asked of me  
What right I had to question  
And I began to wonder too  
Until four signs He gave to me  
Four guides to show the way  
And for a time both long and short  
I found Him where some would not look  
Yet some still say to me,  
"You must do this or that  
To reach Him and His land  
And do you think you can?"  
To them I answer  
"Only I and He, my Lord, shall know"

by

janna leigh heltman

Summer babies  
are creamsicles  
and clover garlands,  
melted and molded  
into child forms  
by the early morning  
sunshine.



Reflection

Connie Robinson





The Dreamer

Connie Robinson





The Native Herdsman

Randy Hill





